



Berlin Bromley .



Plaistow Grove (Author's Collection)

1

At the end of 1975, I was fifteen years old. I lived with my mother and stepdad in their 3-up 3-down Victorian terraced house at Plaistow Grove, Sundridge Park, Bromley, Kent.

Behind the net curtains lurked a mantelpiece with brass ornaments, door knockers and horseshoes, porcelain bells—mementos from seaside resorts around England.

A brown Draylon three-piece suite squatted the room like a black cloud, where I watched my black cat Dudie sleeping along the back of it, his astral body floated up off him, a negative print, hovered in the floral scented air, then descended. And where my stepfather riddled with cancer would kneel in front of the sofa, as though it were Buddha, his balding head resting on a cushion, slipping into morphine dreams via a suppository.

In 1976 I named myself Berlin. Berlin, from Bromley.

My room was decorated in beige and brown latticework wallpaper by Habitat. I'd chosen this in 1974; another wall was painted navy blue and splattered with large gold stick-on stars I'd stolen from Biba—the department store on Kensington High Street.

A small wooden bookcase and a Bentwood chair (*à la* Liza Minnelli in *Cabaret*), a horrible white painted wood chest of drawers on which sat my crappy hi-fi system.

My records; an eclectic mix of the soundtrack from *Cabaret*, Marilyn Monroe's greatest hits, Nico's *Desertshore*, Patti Smith's *Horses*. And Yoko Ono's *Approximately Infinite Universe*.

I became a Yoko fan around 1970 after John Lennon released the single 'Cold Turkey', his *cri de cœur* about heroin withdrawal. On the B-side was Yoko's 'Don't Worry', a fantastic and soaring dirge of chants and wails. I'd spent most of my ten shillings pocket money on the single... and played it over and over again, watching the half-eaten apple on the label going round and round, much to the absolute horror of my parents who kept yelling up the stairs to turn it off.

Yoko's *cri de l'ame* was wonderfully reassuring to me. I felt that Yoko was personally telling me it was alright, don't worry!

On the walls; ripped out from a library book, a photo of Judy Garland's face from the late sixties, close-up, looking a thousand years old. Glitter in her hair like dandruff. And Brett Smiley, the pretty blonde girl/boy discovery of Andrew Loog Oldham, his 1974 single 'Va Va Va Voom' which sunk without trace, but the lyrics hit the head on the nail:

"Hey you, with your hair all torn, va va va voom."

The single's poster of Brett, all long blonde pageboy hair, sitting on a black Bentwood chair in a black vest and tights with big black platform boots, white cotton gloves and red lips pouting a drooping cigarette, referencing Oldham's earlier discovery, Marianne Faithfull, who at this time would have been sitting on a wall in Soho, fixing smack. And other American blonde boys, butch queens with shaggy hair and hairless skin, like roast chickens.

And Jean Cocteau smoking his opium pipe, I loved his hands; twisted, withered vines and the way he wore his jacket. Buttons on his cuff, undone. And Little Nell from *Rocky Horror*, wearing a taffeta toreador jacket and pants designed by Miss Mouse.

I recall seeing Little Nell at the seventies nightclub, Bangs, opposite Centre Point in London. She was wiggling on a raised dance floor that looked like a boxing ring, with a group of shirtless queens. She took her top off and, hands on hips, was wiggling about. One of the security men went to ask her to put her top back on. She did. He went away. She took it off again.

I had left the all boys school—Quernmore, known as Queermore—three years before. My androgyny got me bullied daily... see me sauntering, nay swishing, across the school playground in cork wedge-heeled shoes, my black and grey uniform, trousers worn half-mast, a moth-eaten sweater, house tie in black and purple worn in a huge garrotting knot, bright red stripe of food colouring in my hair, *à la* Bowie circa 1974 and bright green nail polish dripping from my fingertips like some dreaded disease.

A pack of wild schoolboys chanting “Marshall’s a woman”, getting a tennis ball in the eye or seat treatment—where boys stretch your arms behind you over a bench and bend them back as far as they’ll go, sort of dislocating them. Some kind of adolescent S&M caper?

Of course I got them back in my own way. One boy of Polish descent was a nasty little shit and would stick chewing gum in my hair and spit bits of paper at me through a straw... I knew from my mum, that the local gossip was that his mother was having an affair with the next-door neighbour and I told him and his chums and rather than me getting a beating, I watched him shrivel up like a slug sprinkled with salt.

Leaving school at thirteen meant I had to undergo a series of doctors and psychiatrists. The shrink I had to see every fortnight, for an eighteen-month period, was a Doctor Rodriguez; a tall, balding intimidating man in a pinstripe suit, who would ask me all sorts of questions and constantly stare at me, yet whenever I looked at him he’d look away. I had to attend the sessions or be sent to boarding school, I can remember him asking me, “Would you like being sent to boarding school?” to which I replied, “No, and if you try, I’ll kill myself!”

I was finally forced to attend, by law, a welfare tutorial that was basically four classes a week in a government bungalow where a tutor would teach compulsory English, maths, and two other subjects of my choice.

I chose English literature and art.

Mrs Daly was my tutor, an old bag with a 1940s hair-do, she looked like a freckled whale and was Petula Clark’s concert pianist during the Second World War.

Mrs Daly was very eccentric, she’d disappear into her office now and then and use the phone, talking in a very shrill voice and sort of gurgling.

I had no idea why. Maybe she was playing a game to see if any of us would listen at the door, but then you could hear her from the classroom—an old lady speaking like a baby.

The class was small, five or six other misfits, kids who had nervous breakdowns or suffered bullying at school. I attended these classes for about a year, then after a brief spell at Orpington College where I failed all my exams, I worked as a stage manager for their drama productions. What kind of stage manager must I have been? Barely

opening my mouth at all. Finally I dropped out, after meeting my first group of friends and the Sex Pistols.

In my room I had a small tin with a Players cigarette ad on it, inside was my stash of drugs; a wrapper of amphetamine sulphate (I spent £6 of my £9 dole cheque on speed) a couple of blues, jaw-breaking diet pills and several sleeping tablets that I'd stolen from my mother's bedside cabinet. The room hummed with stale make-up, drugs and cigarette smoke.

We moved in, from Catford in 1969. On our first day there the doorbell rang, and standing holding a pint of milk was a middle-aged lady, in her other hand was a 7-inch record—it was the custom to give new people something when they moved into a street. She introduced herself as Mrs Jones and welcomed us to the Grove, quicker than a dart she gave us the record, she said it was her son's, he was in a band and doing very well.

My mother thanked her and promised to return the record asap.

We had a little portable mono player, so we put the record on.

“Ground control to Major Tom”, the voice whined, the music spacey and swirling, my mother and I looked at each other. “Weird!” she said.

My small bedroom was at the back of the house overlooking the garden of patchy grass, a dying Victoria plum tree and a plastic fish pond that I kept an eel in, the one I bought for 35p at the supermarket called Caterers that had a live fish section. The fishmonger offered to kill and jelly it; I was standing there with my red plastic bucket and 35 pence. Lugging the creature back to Plaistow Grove in the bucket was a feat of skill and courage, the eel like aquatic spaghetti, trying to leap out. Walking up the Grove with my bucket full of live eel, coming towards me was a vision.

Two people, one old-looking man in a pinstripe suit, the other a shining thing in a light blue and primrose jumpsuit and red glitter boots.

He stopped me, I didn't look at his face, shyness consumed me but not the eel, who tried to leap out and introduce itself.

“What ya got there mate?” the thin shimmering thing said.

“Umm... a eel!” I said, going as red as the plastic bucket.

“What ya gonna feed it on, then?” it asked.

I shrugged.

“Well, you better find some slugs, snails, worms, things like that,” he said.

Then the man in the suit said. “Come on David, we’ve got to go!”

“Bye mate!” he said.

They walked off down the Grove and I stepped in dog shit.

David’s second name was ‘Bowie’. He was still living at home with his Mum.

One of the things to do in the nullifying boredom of Bromley was to go to jumble sales or roam the charity shops along the High Street—here I’d find a treasure trove of great bits and bobs to wear...

I bought a pair of knee-high black leatherette, lace-up boots, and black sixties stirrup pants, white cotton shirt, black tie, black V-neck sweater; this became my look, a sort of theatrical fascist.

Shoes were always my best find; my prize was a pair of Cuban heeled fake snakeskin ankle boots in brown—swiftly dyed to blue black as was my hair.

Besides clothes and drugs, books were my other obsession. I’d often come home from Bromley Public Library having stolen various tomes, a favourite at the time was William Burroughs’ *Wild Boys*, which I read several times but didn’t really understand, also Genet’s *The Thief’s Journal* and Isherwood’s *Goodbye to Berlin*. Andy Warhol’s *A to B and Back Again* was my bible.

Those four books and their ideas basically informed or formed the persona of ‘Berlin’... at fifteen I was like a sponge soaking everything up, influenced by everything, no boundaries, my imagination ran riot. I literally slipped into the pages of those books and lived my version of them.

Bromley became Berlin in the 1930s. I wanted to worship and fall in love with a sailor, I eventually did. I was already thieving and drugs were a playground, a holiday in the head, from the horror of being an only child, in the numbing isolation of the suburbs.

Bromley High Street in the late seventies was a hangover from the fifties and sixties, like an expanding village, with only a two lane main street. It had The Little Theatre; a Tudor-fronted building that was stuck between Boots the chemists and

Dolcis, a cheap shoe shop. Marianne Faithfull had played there once in *The Three Sisters*. And at Xmas, Cliff Richard as Buttons to Lulu's Prince Charming and Clodagh Rogers' fairy queen in Panto.

I loved walking down the High Street on days when I felt full of confidence and adopted my 'star' persona. I could saunter down the narrow pavements and everyone would turn and stare, I was projecting "Look at me!" If I thought exactly that, then most people would. If I shuffled down the street, my face hidden behind my hair and scarf staring at the ground, people wouldn't take a blind bit of notice of me.

The place I liked was a tea room inside of a shop that sold imported coffees. There one could sit amongst the blue rinse set of old ladies, some would pretend that I didn't exist, others I mused, were old actresses and smiled at this boy in make-up. What a grope at sophistication, at fifteen, sitting in a posh tea room, drinking Earl Grey—but perhaps it was in my genes somewhere.

My grandad had been in the Army in India in the 1920s; he'd started off as a private and within seven years ascended through the ranks, to captain.

My granny was a Lady's maid who then married my grandfather and became a lady of leisure. My mother was born in Bangalore. They had 'Chai Wallers'—tea waiters working for them. So I was part grandson of a Colonial and part South London trash.

In the Army and Navy department store, on the top floor, was the Skyline Restaurant, a terrace that overlooked the adjoining suburbs of Beckenham and Shortlands. I imagined I was meeting Liza Minnelli or Jackie Curtis for lunch.

I would sit and drink at least six cups of black coffee, as if the daily lines of speed weren't enough and scribble very Burroughs-esque rants into my notebook....

For example;

Stars crashing orchids shit out green jelly boy with blonde hair
and green eyes door through which he went they came spurted
out last gasp choking on twins in vomit.

It was at the Skyline that I first encountered Simone, a black girl with platinum blonde hair, wearing a plastic mac and smoking multicoloured Russian cigarettes. Actually I followed her down the High Street into the Skyline. I went to her table to ask for a light for my white Kent Deluxe cigarette. She looked so original, all black and gold, a huge painted red smile that cracked her face, as she delighted in telling me about her 'boyfriend's boyfriend'.

Homo sex had not reared its bulbous head to me before, except...

LADYWELL PARK, SOUTH LONDON 1973

My cousin A and I are drunk out of our minds on very cheap cider, staggering across the grass, passing the odd oak tree. A is thirteen and I'm fourteen, he is a track runner with long red/blonde hair and a figure like the statue of David. He's dreamy and we're drunk and I'm seeing David Bowie and Mick Ronson playing around on stage, I'm humming 'Moonage Daydream' from *Ziggy Stardust*... He has lit a No. 6 cigarette and is passing it to me. I, on purpose, keep falling against him; he's solid as a rock and tall for his age... I look and he's bright pink from the alcohol.

We stop and he leans up against a tree—oak I think—A's shirt is white cheesecloth, soaked with sweat, his first few buttons have popped open revealing his chunky white

torso... I'm slouching at his feet, which are a size 10—he looks like a baby oak tree from my perspective... the lump in his white jeans, massive...

I put my hand on his knee and crawl up his body; he closes his eyes, as I reach his chin, he turns his head away, then I'm kissing his neck, he starts breathing in short puffs but he doesn't stop me as I unbutton his shirt and lick his salty chest, I look up and he's looking to see if anyone's looking—no one is—I rip open his jeans, he has an enormous hard-on.

He's thirteen years-of-age and the same in inches!

My eyes are watering as his cock hits the back of my throat, looking up I see him panting, all puffed up, about to come. The leaves of the tree swaying in the early evening breeze. A plane piercing some clouds. A train going into a tunnel, then a hot soupy explosion in my mouth.



Simone and I had several things in common, love of David Bowie being one of them and dressing up another. Simone decided I should meet her boyfriend, Simon.

"He'll think you're very pretty," she said grinning away.

I met Simon, my parents were away for the weekend and I'd invited them over. Simon was a small and square-shouldered Bowie clone, blonde hair at the front and red at the back, wore a fifties bum-freezer jacket and baggy pants. I found him unnerving; he wouldn't look at you directly, but sideways and every now and then lick his lips like a lizard, actually aping a mannerism Bowie did in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* movie. He had this pervy interest in other people's neuroses, fuck-ups, he liked to observe, umm, me for instance, turn into a nervous wreck, fall apart.

We sat about playing Bowie records, I told them the story about his Mum and the pint of milk, and I couldn't work out if they were impressed or jealous.

Simon said, "Have you had sex with your stepdad yet?"

"What do you mean?" I yelped.

"I hear he wears leather and rides a bike!" Simon sneered.

My stepfather—Bob—did wear a leather motorbike suit, when he went sprint racing. Is that what Simon meant? After a silence that seemed never to end, I felt myself blush underneath my rhubarb blusher.

“I don’t know what you mean,” I stood there biting my nails down to the shoulders. Did Simon suspect something I’d forgotten or didn’t know, or knew, but didn’t want to know?

Simone just sat there grinning smugly, as though she were in on the secret, what secret? My teenage paranoia knew no respite and only increased with each line of speed I snorted.

For some reason Simon (the Andy Warhol of Bromley Common) and I decided to write to each other, even though he only lived a bus ride away. His pen name was ‘Compact’ later changed to ‘Boy’.

Dear Compact,
I’m feeling divinely decadent today, I spent the whole
day deciding whether to paint my nails green or black,
Oh well,
Berlin.

Hi Berlin,
I’d like to be a robot...
I think each day is like a day of Television,
See ya,
Compact.

One of the notes came as an invitation to a party that he and his friend Steve were throwing. The card said, “Saturday Feb 14th—The Nuremberg Rally Re-union Party, dress in Nazi uniform or drag”.

The card had little Swastikas in black glitter all over it. I went into a complete tizzy about what to wear.

The Nuremberg Party was held at Steve’s girlfriend’s parents’ house, near where I lived. I had decided to go in drag. Tottering on black stilettos and in a tight black pencil skirt and tacky light blue blouse (I would have looked pathetic, if it wasn’t for the fact that I was only fifteen) I kept catching my face in the windows of parked cars,

perhaps I shouldn't have greased my hair back with that much of my dad's Brylcreem. My make-up was really thick, sort of 3D.

Steve and Simon opened the door and laughed, did I look funny?

I hadn't met Steve before, he seemed shy, wasn't pervy or sly like Simon. There he was in a red and leopard-skin print jacket, black jeans, large blue eyes, charming, dreamy and unavailable. Instant crush.

I drifted through the brown and beige suburban living room to the kitchen and proceeded to get drunk really quickly on vodka and orange.

Simone was there but I can't recall anyone else of interest. I was having a great time, getting tipsy in drag and trying to negotiate the room in heels, worn for the very first time...

I stood wobbling in the kitchen doorway, Steve taking my photo, me stuffing a peeled banana into my ruby painted gob.

Much later, S.S. [Siouxsie Sioux] arrived in a whirlwind of camp and feathers with her 'girlfriend' Myra in 1920s drag; red satin, livid pink boa and pearls. Myra wasn't really S.S.'s girlfriend, more a fashion accessory.

At first I thought S.S. might be a trannie, dressed in a black and gold Chinese dress with pink stilettos and cropped purple hair with blonde spikes worn as a crown of thorns, her make-up like the mask of a 1920s movie star, except for the little Swastikas as beauty spots dotted over her cheeks, electricity crackled behind her steely blue eyes, she took one look at me and howled.

"My dear, you look lovely, make-up's a bit thick, what's your name, Darling?" she cooed in her throaty voice.

"Berlin," I said spilling vodka and orange down my blouse.

Myra came over acting like S.S.'s lady-in-waiting; she giggled and ran to fetch S.S.'s drinks.

"Have you ever been to Chagarama's, dear?" S.S. asked peering down her nose.

I was fixated on her cheeks and those Swastikas.

"Nah I ain't," I slurred; the vodka was getting to me.

"Oh you'd love the place dear, full of sad old trannies, very camp!" S.S. said.

But I wasn't a sad old trannie; I had a way of taking everything *so* personally.

She could see that my face had fallen a bit, so she cracked a grin and purred, “Let’s dance!”

I was flung into the centre of the room and twirled around to the strains of ‘Love Hangover’ by Diana Ross.

S.S. took the lead, thank God; I kind of loved and hated the attention we were getting from the other nine party guests. She was constantly making little campy hand gestures and using different voices, one minute Betty Boo or imitating some garrulous old tramp; her moods changed just as swiftly, cold and distant melded into vicious and childlike, then transformed into silent (not for too long) and wilful, exactly like a cat.

I felt I’d found an older sister, one who really didn’t give a shit about anything, but loved being around boys that looked like girls, there was no sexual threat from either of us. S.S. was well known on London’s gay scene, she was camp and funny. She wasn’t a fag hag; she was the queen of queens, glamorous and charismatic.

S.S. didn’t replace Simone as a best friend, but this group were my first set of friends ever and I was greedy, obsessive about them; about being their friend.

I think on occasion I might have tried too hard. When one day, Simon pulled me aside and said, “Um, perhaps you don’t need to call me and Steve seven times a day, Berlin,” I was crushed. My parents didn’t have a phone, so each time I wanted to make a call, I’d have to run round to the train station and use the phone box, which was expensive and exhausting. But as I said, I was obsessed.

S.S. had invited me over to her house for tea, in neighbouring Chislehurst, a leafy and posher suburb than Bromley, a village almost. She met me from the bus, first time I'd seen her since the party, she came screeching around the corner in a 1950s poodle skirt, pink stilettos and full make-up.

The house she lived in with her mum was a 1930s semi. S.S.'s mum was a lady with greying hair and horn-rimmed glasses; she served us tea in the living room after S.S. had shown me her bedroom. She was particularly proud of a white Formica bookcase she had just demolished in a fit of rage about something or other. She gave me a brief lesson in make-up. How to apply eyeliner with a steady hand, suck in your cheekbones and aim the blusher brush at an angle smudging the blusher to give deathly hollow cheekbones and to use the right amount of powder.

Whenever S.S. received a phone call, the phone was in the hall in front of a mirror, into which during the conversation, she would pout and pucker her lips, tweak her hair, roll her eyes and gaze intently at herself. Posing, trying to find the best camera angles, her best side. So whenever I called I knew she was talking to her reflection as well as me.

Sitting here at this point twenty-five years later, I have to mention that my mind at that time was floating deep in miasmas of innocence and vacancy, sharpened only by the daily lines of speed and sleeping pills. Smoking those long white Kent Deluxe cigarettes whilst wearing all black.

I was not aware of people's hidden agendas. In my teenage naivety I dreamed that, well, Steve was going to be my boyfriend, ignoring the fact that he was 99% hetero.

At first S.S. feigned indifference towards him, but events would lead to them becoming a couple and I was relegated to their 'plaything'. S.S. and I became firm chums. She invited me to go shopping with her on a Saturday afternoon up to the King's Road, Chelsea, to the shop called SEX. There, she told me, were the best clothes, made by Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood.

We took the ominous train journey from Bromley South to Victoria. As we were standing in line waiting to get our tickets, I remembered I'd seen S.S. a year before in the same spot waiting to buy a ticket, she was heavier then and her hair cropped dark red, in a green mac, flat shoes and a pink ribbon around her neck. I recall standing there and suddenly looking around and seeing this strange girl—and here I was a year later, her friend.

SEX was at World's End on the King's Road; big pink latex SEX sign hung over the door, front windows blacked out and bits of man mannequin in the window.

S.S. went in first, I followed sheepishly, at the far end of the room sat Jordan, the shop assistant in black PVC halter-neck leotard, fishnet stockings, platinum beehive, severe black eye make-up, shiny shiny black patent stilettos. She looked like a cross between a shark and a pickaxe. A queen named Michael also worked there; bleach blonde, pretty pink and pouting.

S.S. wore a pair of men's stripy pyjamas under a light blue see-through mac and high heels. I had on red stirrup pants and red shirt, red plastic sandals, my blue-black fringe flopping into my kohl-ringed eyes.

Jordan leaned on the jukebox, smoking a cigarette, and after five minutes said hello. S.S. was tugging and touching all the garments, exchanging beady eye contact with Jordan. S.S. showed me one T-shirt that said, "Be reasonable demand the impossible" on it, T-shirts with chicken bones on them and a photo of a black man in the nude.

Suddenly bursting through the door came a skinny woman with a shock of white spiky hair in a man's white shirt and leather pants.

"Sold anythingggg yet?" the woman said in a North Country accent.

"Not yet, Vivienne," Jordan haughtily replied.

"Those stockinggs would look good on you," Vivienne nodded at S.S.

"They're fucking great, but not today," S.S. said.

"Could we do a discount?" Jordan asked.

Vivienne glared.

"I'm just looking really," S.S. smiled.

"He doesn't say much does he?" Vivienne said nodding in my direction.

I broke out in a cold sweat.

“He’s only fifteen,” S.S. countered.

“Still at school are you, dear?” Jordan enquired.

“Um, no I left when I was thirteen,” I mumbled. It was the first thing I’d said in an hour.

“Oh, good for you, my dear,” Jordan sneered.

“But what about your education? I mean I think it’s really, really important to be informed about culture and history. I was readinggg about Russia at the turn of the century and their tax system was...”

Jordan had put on the jukebox. Alice Cooper’s ‘Eighteen’ blared out over Vivienne’s twittering.

“Malcolm was sayinggg only the other day... autonomy for kids.”

S.S. looked at me, and in that look I knew it was time to go; we edged our way out of the door.

“Oh, if you’re interested, this band we like is playing next week at the 100 Club, come along if you want,” Jordan handed S.S. a flyer.

So I had four new friends. We were all on the dole and basically there was nowhere to go besides jumble sales and charity shops and the Skyline Café, so we used to go round to each others houses for entertainment, crammed into little bedrooms while our parents watched TV downstairs.

Once again my parents were away somewhere—thank God they didn’t make me go with them. I had S.S. and Steve over; we played records and dipped into my stepdad’s stash of Scotch.

S.S. put Bowie’s ‘Rebel Rebel’ onto the player. Picking up a clothes brush in the shape of a Mallard duck and using it as a pretend microphone she proceeded to lip-sync, then sing along to it... she was mesmerising, sort of trotting back and forth in her frilly poodle skirt, crushing my parents’ shag pile carpet under her spiked heels.

‘YOUR FACE IS A MESS’

Hand gesture to face, roll of her eyes, then a Nazi salute, head ducking, rubbing her ear to her shoulder like a cat. Steve and I broke into spontaneous applause.

I noticed a gleam in his eye aimed directly at her. I think I felt jealous? Sometime later S.S. took a cab home, leaving Steve and me alone. We sat and smoked and talked

about how great S.S.'s performance was. I felt more and more nervous. I sat there babbling on as Steve sat with his legs over the arm of the chair, giving me *that look*. Awkward silence.

"What record should I put on now?" I slurred.

I slurred and mumbled a lot in those days.

"Aren't you going to offer me a bed for the night?" Steve asked. There was *that look* again.

"Um, oh," I couldn't find the right answer.

"I couldn't be bothered walking home now."

He followed me up the winding stairs, to only three doors; mine, the bathroom and my parents' room. He went into the latter.

Clothes, records, drugs and books, not necessarily in that order, were the essential accoutrements of my adolescence. Days, hours were spent searching through the charity shops and jumble sales, getting the right outfit together, and now that S.S. had taught me how to do my make-up, my new persona of BERLIN was swirling into being. There I'd sit in my bedroom in front of an old scratched mirror, my box of tricks before me. Nico or Patti or New York Dolls—'Jet Boy' ('jet boy stole my babyyyyyyyyyyyyy') the thunderous drumming and hand-clapping being a favourite—blaring away on my crappy stereo system, my mother calling up to "turn it down".

I'd start to get ready at least five hours before I'd have to leave the house. Take a bath, put Max Factor 'ivory' pan stick on in thick strips across my face and neck and blend it in, then dust it down with Leichner's translucent face powder, and violently bash my face with the powder, using a theatrical pink puff, huge clouds of powder exploding off my cheekbones, dusting off the excess with a brush. Then pencil in my plucked eyebrows in black, ring my eyes in black as it accentuated their darkness—they looked like two currents in very white dough—add mascara, thick, but without getting the little black bobbles on the ends. Then the difficult bit, Biba's rhubarb and custard blusher; rhubarb along the cheeks and custard highlighting them, giving a bruised look. My lips painted in either Mary Quant lip-gloss that resembled drool or for one phase purple/black lipstick.

Somewhere in the midst of all this conjuring, I'd pause for a line of sulphate, a rolled pound note up my nostril. And the result? Perfect, porcelain, narcotic panda. My hair at this point would have been a blue/black wedge—parted on the side and floppy fringe over one eye, a thatch of black cotton wool.

And then my entrance down the stairs, through the living room, passed my parents watching TV. My stepfather with boggled eyes, would just stare to the inevitable bleating of my mother's "What on EARTH! do you look like?" Sometimes I would swish right passed them without saying a word or other times I'd stop and ask for a fiver.

Steve introduced me to lots of new and significant records. It was in his bedroom, that I first heard Patti Smith's *Horses*, I was entranced by the black-and-white cover of a girl/boy and a mind-searing poem on the back cover... let alone the track 'Birdland'. Never heard anything like it, a song about daddy and aliens, it always affected me that song, about a missing daddy—mine had snuffed it when I was four.

Then Nico's *Desertshore* even stranger, it sounded like a film soundtrack and indeed it was for *La Cicatrice Intérieure* by Philippe Garrel... I'd never heard a harmonium before, her voice not like any other.

The record actually took you to the edge of nightmare.

THE 100 CLUB

I wore a huge white T-shirt on which I had painted JET BOY in a dripping scrawl, black nylon stirrup pants, my black lace-up boots, and fifties windcheater jacket that I'd dyed badly to a odd shade of pink. I painted my nails bottle green or black. I had a crop—blue/black stubble.

I went with Steve.

The 100 Club was one long rectangular basement, low stage; it resembled a church hall where they hold wedding receptions. I guess the club's heyday was in the 1960s when everybody played there. In 1976 it was almost a ghost venue.

We arrived late; the Pistols were already on stage...

Noise... screeching...

We went close, twenty or so people milling about, flash of a camera, I noticed a hippie guy standing in the corner talking to Jordan.

Hippies were hated.

I didn't know any, except my cousin. Also a woman dwarf dressed in seventies tat platform boots, gold ruffled wristbands, and this was Helen, Malcolm McLaren's sidekick, partner in crime, little bit on the side.

Malcolm darting about, he never seemed to stand still, his carrot-top bobbing through the gathering. Steve told me that the hippie was John Paul Getty III, the one who'd been kidnapped and had his ear cut off and sent as a ransom to his family.

I couldn't see the missing ear because it was hiding behind his long hair.

Vivienne was there and Little Debbie from north London.

I couldn't take my eyes off the Pistols' singer/screamer Johnny Rotten who was crouching on stage in a red sweater full of holes and safety pins, a white Peter Pan collar shirt, the kind schoolboys wear, torn and hanging, orange crop, he was screaming into the microphone; Steve Jones swinging his guitar here and there; Paul Cook, my favourite, on drums, all chunky body and messy blonde hair, bashing away and Glen Matlock doing a Paul McCartney impersonation... all the violent energy

spewing out of Johnny's mouth, now blowing his nose into a handkerchief, then spitting... I was startled and fascinated, each song seemed to start then disintegrate immediately, their aggression coming mainly from Rotten was amphetamine-fuelled, something I felt viscerally watching them.

Suddenly during one number, from behind me someone took my shoulders and started to shake me violently about, then used me as a pole vault to jump off the ground, in the air, land and do it all over again. I turned around and it was S.S. grinning from ear to ear. I waited till my whole body had stopped spinning and then we both did it together. Then I noticed another couple were doing it, then another.

The gig lasted about twenty minutes; the Pistols leaving the stage swigging beer and cursing at the audience... guitar feedback... something had changed in my brain. What, I wasn't exactly sure.

Perhaps it was to do with them expressing all the rage, fuck-ups and frustrations, teenage angst and psychosis I'd been living through in the past few years.

Maybe Johnny and the boys had tapped into something more primeval?

Amphetamine Sulphate!

It nearly always had the opposite effect on me, where for most people it made them incessantly chatty and busy, I tended to implode, to sit in one place for hours on end thinking myself into a mentally deranged corner. Being shy I hardly said a word, I didn't like my speaking voice very much; it was 'queenie', and I'd mumble (remnants of my nervous breakdown) so people would often ask me to repeat what I'd said. The thing I hated about being shy was that people read it as being snooty.

Aloof would be more apt, I was aloof, in my own little world built out of books, records, make-up, drugs, clothes, pop and film stars.

The very worst thing about speed was the come-down, seeing yet another dawn, bones shivering, turning to powder, skin prickling and sweating—someone said my skin felt like paper—teeth itching and that feeling of desolation that my world was about to end. I'd get this immortal sensation that I'd been alive forever and would live forever more, I would feel this terrifying melancholy with the curtains drawn all day and cigarette smoke engulfing the room. I'd sit and stare into the mirror, watching my eyes burn holes in my face.

However it wasn't long after, and with a little experimentation, that I discovered mixing speed with a sleeping pill or tranquilliser was the sensation I'd been seeking.

Mandrax with a couple of vodkas and a line of speed... aweeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee! Stagger, stagger, float, stagger, stagger, drift, dreaming on my feet, all the hard edges of reality softened and of course all my heroes and heroines were druggies and I gladly followed them in their staggering. Acid, hash, coke, even smack at one point were considered 'hippie' drugs and were avoided at all cost.

And just because I like the sound of the names of the pills, I'm going to list all the ones I tried here...

- 1 Black Bombers,
- 2 Purple Hearts,
- 3 Black and Whites,
- 4 Nembutal,
- 5 Mandrax,
- 6 Tuinal,
- 7 Phenobarbital,
- 8 Blues,
- 9 Dexedrine,
- 10 Tombstones.

CLUB LOUISE

S.S. mentioned this exclusive little club in Soho that you had to be a member to get in and was populated by lesbians and the odd male lesbian watcher and a couple of well-known actors.

We all went, led by S.S. through the streets of Soho to 61 Poland Street to a red painted door with gold plates. S.S. rang the bell and through a little peephole a voice said in lisping tones, “Are you members?” What, I wonder, did we look like through that little window; some nightmare Walt Disney might have had?

We got in.

Sitting at a low desk in the entrance way was a very old lady with a pile of grey hair atop her head and long grey dress and grey fur coat—grey lady? Bits of diamonds here and there, she looked a thousand-years-old.

“Ah, you must all become members, my dears,” her accent was French.

Three pounds bought us a little red and white membership card.

Michael the doorman was an American fag and Madame Louise’s toy-boy. This was her club. We were all under twenty-one and looked it, but somehow they didn’t care, we must have passed some test. Perhaps Louise wanted to attract a younger clientele?

The small foyer led into a bar room, a large mirror ran along the back wall, very dim lighting so you could hardly see your reflection, long black leatherette sofa seating, small tables with red cloths on them, black chairs, red carpets.

It was empty except for a waiter we named ‘Ballerina John’, an Irish queen with really awful acne and long red hair that he kept flicking over one eye. John had been thrown out of dance school because of some sexual indiscretion in the toilets.

Ballerina John came over and took our orders—five vodka and oranges. And because of the licensing laws, it was required that we were served food—food was a few slices of anaemic-looking Spam and shrivelled gherkins on a paper plate.

S.S. had found this place on one of her jaunts with pretend-girlfriend Myra. Most of us kept looking at ourselves in the gloriously long and flattering mirrors.

From our table we could see a spiral staircase going down.

"I love these mirrors," S.S. purred.

"What's down there?" I asked.

"A dance floor," S.S. said, retouching her nose with her powder puff.

Yet no one moved, in our own ways we were 'posing', which can be defined as concentrating entirely on your image (the mirror, essential), on our adopted personas.

There I was in all black, except white shirt and white cigarette, drugged and tipsy, oozing a sense of myself, or what I thought I was as 'Berlin', a vacant kind of acting.

You didn't have to do anything; you just had to 'be'.

Image is everything.

What did I wear to Louise's the first time?

Old men's pyjama jacket with a silver grey tie over black ski pants and black plastic sandals and white fingerless gloves. S.S. in one of her fifties Swanky Modes dresses, (Swanky Modes was a shop in Camden run by two sisters, designers of vaguely fetish women's wear)—S.S. was wearing a b/w polka dot 'Betty Boo' dress; she would do impersonations of the cartoon character now and then. We'd catch ourselves in the mirror, suck in our cheeks and pout like mad.

Sipping our vodkas, we could hear strains of music, Diana Ross and the Supremes... S.S. decided that we should all trot downstairs... a small dance floor surrounded by low tables with red cloths and mirrors around the walls. We sat at a table under the stairs.

There was a smoked-glass DJ booth, where a young dyke played Bowie then Marlene Dietrich... around the room sat a couple of butch dykes with feathered haircuts and three-piece men's suits.

S.S. pulled me onto the dance floor to Bryan Ferry's 'Let's Stick Together'. I followed her in a demented jive, swinging each other around and around, yelping and cooing. We'd suddenly stop mid-jive and turn and look at ourselves in the mirrors, as though fixing and freezing our features forever at sixteen. With the help of make-up and the dark lights of the club we looked perfect and glamorous. We really pissed the dykes off, who sat watching, as we two androgens took centre stage at their club.

After we sat down a dyke came over to our table—trouble I thought.

“Hello, who the fuck are you lot? Love your drag dears,” introducing herself as Lynda, a buxom lady with really intense black eyes. She bought us all a round of drinks.

Later, Lynda brought over her friend David, a good-looking bloke with dark brown hair and eyes and very pale skin, wearing a red and white mohair sweater from SEX, he sat down next to me and told me he thought I was “a pretty chicken”.

Nobody else spoke to us as the club filled up. The DJ was Caroline, Lynda’s girlfriend; we soon dubbed her “pilchard face”. One famous dyke at the club was a shaved-headed black woman with no front teeth called Butch Joe dressed in a beige Burtons men’s suit, her two catchphrases were;

“Strap a dick to me, dear” and “I want my tits off.”

Louise’s closed at 3 a.m., which meant getting the night bus home, a cab was too expensive. One night Lynda invited us back to her apartment for more drinks. I’d have to tell my mother I’d fallen asleep on the night bus. Lynda lived in an apartment at the back of St. James’s Hotel, spitting distance from Buckingham Palace. Through the foyer, across a courtyard and up three flights of stairs.

This was seventies glamour incarnate... a long winding corridor that led to a large living room, with two Heals sofas and thick damask curtains, smoked-glass coffee table, shagpile carpet and stereo system.

Lynda put on *Judy Live at Carnegie Hall* the moment we got in and got on the telephone and ordered her cab driver to pick up a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken and chips, and a couple of bottles of vodka and orange juice—breakfast she called it.

I was to learn that Lynda was very well connected.

Dawn tried to creep in through a crack in the curtains. Lynda speeding, was monologuing about her work, “You know Benny Hill is a client dear, he loves being put in a rubber mask and locked in a cupboard.” She had a sex dungeon in Earls Court and had a wide variety of clients from politics and show biz.

David was sitting very close to me on the sofa. S.S. and Steve had trotted off somewhere. I was coming down.

“Do you need a sleeper dear?” Lynda asked.

“Yes please.”

Lynda produced a little yellow pill that I recognised as Nembutal.

Down it went.

Down I went.

“See you two later, I’m off to shove something nasty up Caroline,” Lynda and David exchanged *that look*. The downer was working fast, I was feeling woozy and wonderful, little black shutters were being lowered over my eyes.

David’s hand on my knee, his tongue in my mouth, breath in my ear, I flopped on my back, he got on top and rubbed his crotch on my thighs, I could have been anywhere then he said, “Can I fuck you?” I said he could, it was nice of him to ask, I’d never been fucked before and he turned me onto my belly and pulled down my slacks, spat in his hand and put it in, at first I couldn’t feel anything or ummmm a sensation like a cotton bud down there, he groaned a bit, it sort of hurt, I was nearly asleep, he pulled out and whispered, “Thank you.” Judy was singing “do it again”—applause.

WOOF WOOF WOOF

Besides those sojourns to Lynda's and Louise's, we all still lived at home with our parents. Thus more shopping for great things to wear and more terminal boredom.

S.S. and I were somewhere complaining about living in no-man's land and how everything was so sleepy and closeted and narrow.

"We should go to Cherry's wine bar tonight and start a fight," S.S. suggested.

"I could take the dog and get him to shit on the floor." My parents had this revoltingly fat cocker spaniel called Pip.

"Or *you* could go as a dog," S.S. cackled.

"I could wear his choke chain and lead."

"Oh let's," S.S. squealed.

"I'm not sure!"

"Berlin."

As the sun went down on Bromley South shopping mall—the shadow of the last shopping trolley passing across the expanse of concrete—S.S. and I met at Bromley South station. I was in my red pants and ski slacks. S.S. in her fifties skirt and high heels.

We crossed the road to the bar, outside I put on the choke chain and lead and got down on all fours and started wagging my tail. S.S. lifted her head imperiously and we sauntered in. It was a Friday evening and the bar was getting busy. At first nobody noticed, we walked to the centre of the room, a few people looked, nudged their friends, we arrived at an empty table in the middle of the room. S.S. sat down and I jumped up and sat on a chair, my tongue lolling out, panting. S.S. looked at me and I started to growl, more people were taking notice now and laughing in a good-natured way, I yapped a few times. The clientele of Cherry's were straight, hippie types or blokes having a drink with their birds.

A waitress came over to our table, tittering behind her order pad.

"Um, what would you like to drink?" she giggled.

S.S. looked right through her and said in a loud voice as hard as nails, “I’d like a vodka and orange and a bowl of water for my dog.”

Everyone laughed.

“What?” said the waitress.

“Are you fucking deaf? Vodka and orange and a bowl of water for my dog!” S.S. snapped.

This was a command performance; we had everyone in that room’s attention.

The waitress went away—puff! We sat in silence.

The bar was now reduced to a few giggles, murmurs, the waitress came back with our order on her tray... vodka... and a bowl of water was put in front of me.

S.S. lit a cigarette and took a sip, I dived into the bowl of water lapping and splashing it everywhere with my doggy’s tongue.

The entire room was frozen, smiles dropped to the floor as S.S.’s beady eyes surveyed the room over the rim of her glass. I started barking.

“Sssssshhhh!” S.S. commanded.

We weren’t there for their entertainment. We were now taking control of the entire place, hijacking it and they didn’t like it. Suddenly from behind the bar the manager sprang clutching a cricket bat and marched over to us.

“Alright, that’s enough,” he said.

S.S. ignored him and I finished my last drop of water and burped—not a very doggy thing to do.

“I said—get out!” he bellowed.

S.S. turned to him, fixing him with her eagle eyes.

“I haven’t finished my drink yet.”

“I don’t care, leave!”

Very slowly, what seemed like hours, S.S. drained her glass, the guy standing there with his cricket bat, what on earth was he going to do? What was he going to defend, his macho ego?

S.S. gave a short whistle and said, “Come on boy, walkies.” I jumped down to the floor on all fours, tugging, pulling us through the stunned crowd, cocking my leg up

at the last table, jaws were now on the floor, utter silence, we went through the swing doors and into the mall.

S.S. and I laughed so much we lost it, and we felt triumphant that we caused such a scene. We'd put a little knife up the arse of Bromley High Street.

BERLIN BABY BONDAGE PARTY

It was Simon's idea, again my parents were off somewhere and it was decided that my house should be the place to throw a party.

"BERLIN BABY BONDAGE PARTY"—you could come as your favourite kink or perversion.

I spent all afternoon draping every piece of furniture in white sheets and storing all the knick-knacks in drawers and cupboards, leaving out only glasses, ashtrays and record player.

One by one they turned up to co-host the thing with me. S.S.'s costume for the night was a thick plastic apron with a Ribena blackcurrant juice cartoon on it, fishnet tights, stilettos, and nothing else. With her blonde and purple crown of thorns hair and make-up, she looked scary, brandishing a cat-o'-nine-tails whip. It was always about what you wore.

With my blue/black cropped hair, really white make-up and purple lips, I poured myself into a black nylon catsuit, leatherette boots, thick red belt around my 28-inch waist. I weighed eight stone.

Of course speed had been taken and Simon told me that the Pistols were coming, he'd told them it was a party for them.

At first, it was just us lot sitting around on the ghost furniture listening to *Diamond Dogs*, then as it went on, more and more people turned up, I didn't know any of them, friends of friends.

Now Iggy Pop's *Raw Power* was blasting out... 'Gimme danger little stranger.'

I was introduced to a girl called Tracy, who had just beaten her boyfriend up, she was tall and gangly with huge brown cow-eyes and silver-platinum bob, she was chewing gum and said hello in an off-hand way.

Next a little sparrow girl came over to me, dressed in a fifties man's suit, crew cut, chewing her face off, speeding, said her name was Sharon and then said, "I'll never

leave you,” which was very scary coming from a total stranger. Did she mean she’d never leave the party or what?

The night was starting to take on the appearance of a pirate ship going out of control, there was nothing I could do except freak out and take speed and booze by the ton.

I was then introduced to Billy, a friend of Steve’s, he was cute in a nerdy way, and he looked like Mister Spock. Then the Pistols arrived, Paul was sweet, asking me if I was OK. Steve Jones just grunted something and got a bevvy. Glen, I can’t remember any exchange between us, and lastly Johnny.

I was standing in the kitchen, when Simon brought Johnny to meet me, in a black beret, little black mirrored glasses, black rubber T-shirt, and glittery baggy pants, brothel creepers, very thin, cigarette burns up his arm.

“So, this is your party?” he sneered.

“Yes, but it was Simon’s idea.”

“Are you still at school?” he asked.

“Nah, I left ages ago.”

“I hope your neighbours are deaf,” he quipped.

The conversation wasn’t particularly memorable, but his presence was, whether heightened by speed, or because he was the first person I’d met who’d sung/screamed on stage, he seemed to glow with charisma.

Snap, crackle, pop, S.S. brandishing her whip, slicing welts into my parents’ polystyrene-tiled ceiling. The party was on the edge of riot. I kept prowling from room to room; there were only six in the entire house, to keep a check on what was going on. Bathroom, mostly locked, Steve Jones fucking one of many in the bathtub...

Parents’ room... Pistols’ roadie Nils fucking someone in my parents’ bed—could have been Jill Price, a friend of Sharon’s, her make-up was always smudged and her dress falling off, tottering on her stiletto heels, she latched onto Nils, her infamous catchphrase being, “Nils, you got 10p?”

Jill was always in need of 10p to make a phone call.

Paul—there was something of an excited Labrador puppy about him—he was fucking someone somewhere... I opened the back door and a couple were fucking under the Victoria plum tree.

S.S. was whipping everything in sight.

The doorbell rang, I peeked behind the net curtains, and it was the next-door neighbour, a Mrs Hall... she saw me and demanded I come to the door. I ignored her. She rang again.

“Who the fuck is that?” S.S. asked.

“The old bag next door,” I quivered.

S.S. went straight to the door, me hiding behind her apron strings and fishnets...

“Turn that music down this instant or I’m going to call the police,” Mrs Hall demanded.

“Oh, fuck off,” S.S. spat.

Mrs Hall eyeing S.S.’s costume and seeing the fishnets.

“How dare you talk to me like that... you... you... you slut!” Mrs Hall yelled.

OH, DEAR.

“What did you call me?” S.S. demanded.

“A little slut!” said Mrs Hall, trembling with fear and rage, eyes filling up behind her fifties fly-away glasses.

“How dare you call me a slut, you fucking old cunt!” and with that S.S. leant forward and gave the old bag an almighty slap across the face, knocking her glasses into the nearby privet hedge.

Mrs Hall went wailing and running down the garden path.

S.S. slammed the door.

I went buzzing around the rooms like a demented humming bird telling everyone what had happened. I could hear Marilyn Monroe singing ‘I Wanna Be Loved By You’ blaring out of my bedroom window. I went to investigate.

My room was a wreck, the stereo was on the floor, and all my records were scattered about, my drawers had been emptied out and among the debris sat Johnny lining up lines of speed on the grooves of a record as it went round at 16 rpm.

I noticed again three or four cigarette burns on his pale forearm. He looked at me and grinned and went back to his snorting.

I was now feeling completely helpless and wished everyone would fuck off.

Dawn... white sheets covering the furniture dotted with cigarette burns, whip marks across the ceiling—would my parents notice? A few broken glasses.

There was a girl at the party, have to call her Sandra, because I don't recall her name, she had long brown hair and very big tits and for some wicked reason Simon tried to match-make us... I'd thought it would have been pretty obvious from the way I looked that I was a lovely queer flower not ripe for the plucking... but Simon cajoled her into pursuing me... so I had this girl with pendulous breasts trying to seduce me... Simon also had a Standard 8mm camera... and I recollect as dawn was spewing through the curtains, a chase ensued, Sandra chasing me, Simon following Sandra, up the little stairs and into my bedroom, now totally wrecked... someone pushed me onto the bed and Sandra on top of me, Simon pulling off her top and releasing those massive mammaries while I squirmed about underneath her, actually trying to escape and lock myself in the bathroom. I was terrified, and I think Steve and S.S. were joining in trying to get me seduced by Sandra the secretary...

The speed comedown was kicking in; I was feeling like the end of the world was nigh. I'd actually done something, by throwing this party that was an act of anarchy, something that went against my parents' wishes... I'd started 'rebellling' by not going to school, dyeing my hair, taking drugs. Then suddenly the house was silent.

I went to my bedroom, and drew the curtains and waited for...

THE AFTERMATH

Barricading myself in my room, literally pulling the enormous chest of drawers in front of my bedroom door... I could hear my parents stomping up the stairs... they sounded like a couple of demons; kicking scratching, pounding on the door... which didn't budge... the angrier they got, the more I shrunk into the corner by the window... out of which I saw Mr and Mrs Hall stomping up and down their garden path, intent on some kind of revenge.

CLUB LOUISE 2

At first we went to Louise's either on Friday or Saturday nights, then later weeknights only.

Word of mouth got around and everyone; Malcolm, Vivienne, Jordan already knew the club, she told the Pistols and they came down. This one evening I'd arranged to meet S.S. there. I was sitting on one of the leather sofas twitching and nursing vodka, staring at the plate of cold meat. Like a lot of teenagers I'd nick the odd £5 note from my mother's purse or stepdad's wallet, I had to, I'd just started getting dole and my speed habit was half a dole cheque, I always needed extra.

So there I was, the club wasn't busy, Ballerina John putting on more make-up to cover up his pock-marked skin and flicking his hair over his eye, sucking in his cheeks at the mirror, when in sauntered Jordan in her usual PVC leotard and Dior handbag and little black-faced wristwatch which always reminded me of my granny.

She plonked down next to me, looking bleary-eyed, took a Marlboro cigarette out of her bag and lit up...

"And how are you, my dear?" she asked.

"Speeding out of my brains," I quipped.

"What a night I've had," she began.

"Um Jordan, I don't suppose you've any spare downers going do you?" I whined.

"I don't, my dear."

"I feel freaked out, I want to come down a bit," I'd taken about four or five blues and was shaking.

"Well, what goes up must come down, my dear," she said.

"I must get a little thingy for this," she said shaking the watch next to her ear.

Lynda appeared with an entirely new look, gone was the men's pinstripe suit and the feathered haircut. Now she wore her hair in a blonde crop, eyes in black circles, leather knee boots, black nylon leotard, thick belt and riding crop.

"That Jewish cunt," she bellowed. "I'm going to fucking have her, dear."

She stomped to the bar and ordered a V&O = vodka and orange.

Obviously Lynda had had a fight with the ‘Jewish cunt’ Caroline—what about was anyone’s guess—Lynda was a pill-popping speed freak and drama queen.

“Back in a moment dear,” and disappeared into the ladies loo.

Lynda came out of the ladies with a vodka and orange and went downstairs.

“What’s she up to?” Jordan hissed.

What Lynda was up to became apparent several days later when Caroline’s face broke out in weeping sores. The result of drinking what she thought was V&O, was in fact vodka and Lynda’s piss.

THE SANCTUARY OF BATHROOMS

One place, be it at a party somewhere or a club, was the bathroom. In the bathroom you were assured of two things.

1. Mirrors.
2. Something 'interesting' in the medicine cabinet.

The best bathrooms were the ones where the cabinet had mirrored doors, multitudinous reflections on mirrored walls. There you could gaze endlessly without any interruption and get stoned on some mother's bottle of Valium.

The bathroom as a retreat from too much, or not enough.

Not a place to share. Although I did once, with Jordan.

I sat on the closed toilet lid, thinking of Judy Garland who had snuffed it less than ten years earlier on a toilet. I suppose it was the vast quantity of speed I'd taken, counteracting the vodka and Nembutal, that was making me ponder such things. Jordan was blushing a temple when her beady-eye caught mine, breaking the hymen of silence...

"You know Berlin, I've never been able to work out if you're really intelligent or really stupid!" she said philosophically.

There we were, in this members' club of only fifteen minutes, before many were banging on the door, desperate to be admitted.

"Fuck off!" said Jordan, as we pouted and powdered and blushed and flushed.

Gawd, if we weren't going to clubs or gigs then we'd all pile along to parties. Every occasion was an opportunity to wear something new and pose, pose, pose.

One such party S.S. took us to, we met an outrageous queen dressed in a silver paper jumpsuit and shock of curly black hair, hooked nose—*screaming* he was, must have invented the term.

Philip Sallon, the notorious Philip, seen everywhere, knew everyone, of course we all found him unbearable. He always made a grand screaming entrance then proceeded to try to be the centre of attention. Some of his home-made outfits were kind of inspirational; he was the first as far as I know to wear black bin liners; in a way his 'talent' was that he made something out of not very much.

Months later, a photo session was arranged for us to appear in Malcolm's one-off *Anarchy in the UK* newspaper. The set was Lynda's kitchen, graffiti with slogans.

The word went out not to tell Philip about it, not only was he not from Bromley, but he'd turn the session into *Carry on Chomping*. The Bromley Contingent, a label given to us by journalist Caroline Coon, or the manager of the 100 Club, don't know which and it doesn't matter either. The Bromley Contingent was: S.S. Steve Severin, Simon Barker, Simone Thomas, Me, Tracy O'Keefe, Sharon Hayman. Little Debbie and Lynda and Billy Idol were also involved.

Philip got wind, I don't know which little Judas told him, and he turned up, pushing his way to the front, making ridiculous faces, everyone standing away from him as best they could, leaving me to be photographed next to him.

The other person who thought she was part of the Bromley Contingent was someone called Sue Cat Woman. What could one say about such a creature? Well, she fucked everyone's boyfriend and like Philip, barged her way into the milieu. Rotten apparently thought she was interesting—his *faux pas*—she thought she could replace Jordan, but didn't have the charisma or the originality, she was in the right place at the right time with that one look. She used Vicks mentholated rub on her hairdo, so she stank.

EL PARADISE STRIP CLUB: A SEX PISTOLS' GIG

On Brewer Street in Soho, down rickety old stairs, to a small dance floor, dirty velvet cinema seats, the stage very tiny, with tatty velvet curtains. The place was run by the Maltese Mafia.

Vivienne in a black rubber catsuit, thin purple lines around her eyes and mouth, she was a vision, an albino voodoo doll, she kept breaking into a little dance, like Groucho Marx tangoing with a headless chicken. It was her imitation of Chuck Berry's duck walk; like Malcolm she never kept still and went on these long diatribes about whatever had flown into her head at that moment:

"Malcolm and I want to see an army of teenagers in bondage gear and PVC."

I think Malcolm had the notion of creating a scene with the Bromley Contingent, rather like Andy Warhol's Factory crowd. Helen, knee-high in the crowd, in her tatty glam look. I couldn't quite understand what she said, not because it was a long way for the words to travel; she used to speak a lot in gay slang (Polari) that she'd learnt off her queenie friends.

"Varda the bona lallies on that omie," roughly translated "look at the lovely legs on that man," or "Ohh, what a nantoir palone" translating as "Oh, what a tacky woman." And actually S.S. taught me the entire language one night, sitting on the tube, going someplace... we were sitting opposite some fat suburban girl and she'd said, "OOO girl, Varda that nante palone, with that cod riah and nasty eeek!"

S.S. was fluent in Polari, having mastered it in the gay clubs she had hung out in.

Tracy, who came to my party was there, looking great in her platinum bob, black leotard under leather pants and red mules, she bopped about with Little Debbie, looking adoringly at Jones, who at one point whipped his cock out and pissed into the audience...

Malcolm running about, Vivienne doing the duck-walk down the front, the whole fucking scene was there; one that was yet to have a label attached to it.

The gig fell apart, a stripper tried to do a striptease on stage and got booted off... discord and violence filled the room, bottles sailed through the air... someone pulled a knife... chaos ruled... I looked at the exit sign.

CLUB LOUISE 3

Mirror-gazing one night—Ballerina John looking even more grotesque in the reflection—S.S. came in with a new look, black hair, red-tipped in an up-sweep, black PVC bra, leggings to match and a Swastika armband.

It was the customary greeting to kiss each other on the cheek and coo, “darling”.

“Where’d you get that?” I asked.

“Oh, somewhere in King’s Cross,” S.S. replied vaguely.

“What do you think?” she ventured.

“Camp!” I replied.

“Yeah, concentration camp!” she bellowed. “Only £8.”

Lynda came over and perched besides us.

“Love it dear,” she said.

Suddenly Jordan appeared wearing a leather pencil-skirt and brown shirt with a Swastika armband, looking every inch a Nazi *Frau*. She sat with us. I felt left out. I wanted an armband.

Sometime later I wandered down to the dance floor to look for S.S. and saw Caroline standing in front of her, hands on her hips.

“Take it off!” Caroline said through clenched teeth.

“Don’t fucking tell me what to do!” S.S. hissed back.

“We don’t want that shit down here,” Caroline continued.

S.S. looked at her with steely eyes, said nothing.

“I said take it off, I’m Jewish and it’s fucking offensive.”

“Fuck off, pilchard face.”

S.S. stormed off to the ladies loo. I waited a bit then followed.

Pilchard face sunk back into her smoked-glass DJ booth.

Opening the doors to the ladies loo a crack, I could see S.S.’s reflection in the mirror. With her black eye-pencil she was furiously drawing little Swastika beauty spots on her cheeks.

“Cunt!” she mouthed.

At a party off the King's Road, I met Domini. We all took over the tiny basement flat of some nutty Yugoslavian lesbian whose catchphrases were, "I can't be seen anywhere besides Kensington and Chelsea, dahling," and "Where's the Weetabix, Domini?".

I was sitting next to Simone when this rather dumpy girl with blonde hair and moony face sat down beside me and smiled. Was she a hippie? After a while she edged nearer and eventually put her arm around my shoulder. Then she made a grab for my 'tits' and discovered I had none, and that I was a boy and that Simone wasn't my girlfriend—lots of people thought we were a lesbian couple.

Domini came back in jeans, sweater... she was eighteen, from Melbourne, had escaped for mysterious reasons and ended up in London... from a wealthy family, her father was a famous doctor and horse breeder... she loved talking and told me about her job as a cat burglar, stealing jewels from hotel rooms and thieving from department stores, we were definitely on the same wavelength. Thus began the start of a thirty-year friendship. Domini is important in the story, because she was the one who introduced me to prostitution.

Tracy and Debbie had been 'clipping' in Soho. Clipping meant luring some old sod up an alleyway to have sex, then grabbing his money and running like buggery—if the punter got stropky, you just kneed him in the balls. A lot of transvestite hookers worked that way. One, called Biba, used to carry a 12-inch bread knife in her clutch bag.

So for my first attempt at whoring, Domini and I stood outside the Hilton Hotel on Park Lane one evening, she in shocking pink, full-length cashmere cardigan stolen from Harrods and me in black garb and large trench coat.

After about an hour, a Rolls-Royce pulled up, window down, and a middle-aged Arab man asked if we were available. Domini pulled me into the back of the Roller.

It was my first time in a limousine, it seemed all airy and light and quiet and really glamorous as the sun went down on Park Lane. Domini's gift of the gab kept the man

entertained. I was getting cold feet. We arrived at a townhouse in Knightsbridge. The man led us up several flights of stairs to a luxurious bedroom suite.

We perched on the edge of a sofa and he offered us something to drink. He decided to fuck us at the same time...

1. I didn't want to get fucked.

2. I didn't want to get naked with Domini who was a friend and a girl!

"I don't want to Domini, can't we just leave?" I whispered.

"Don't worry I'll do him and then we'll leave," she said.

They went into the bedroom while I watched out the window, pretending it wasn't happening, staring at the orange street lights, and sipping my drink. Domini came out ten minutes later clutching a £20 note; we hurried out of the house.

"Let's get a drink, somewhere," she said.

I took her to Louise's.

Billy Broad was a friend of Steve and Simon, he went to Sussex University and read Russian Philosophy and something else just as useless. He had a Ford Transit van, which turned out to be useful as he'd give us all a lift back to Bromley after a night out speeding and drinking—there was an Irish pub in St. Paul's that did a lock-in and we could drink there until 7 or 8 in the morning. Billy lived with his parents too, in a huge house, in a posh part of Bromley called Bickley.

He was cute, big lips, with which he practised his Elvis snarls, but looked more like Cliff Richard. A public schoolboy playing a cool American, he was the good guy until he dyed his hair blonde and started Generation X.

Straight boys either intimidated me or I got bad crushes on them.

S.S. and Steve suddenly became very focused, they'd sit upstairs at Louise's and just talk to Malcolm or whoever, they started a band and were invited to play a festival at the 100 Club, they found a drummer; a friend of Rotten's, he couldn't play but looked right, so Sid Vicious, spiky hair and leather jacket bashed away for them.

I didn't go to their gig. I was probably at home in my bedroom seething with jealousy, they'd formed a band and become a couple. I felt left out. I heard through gossip that their gig was both scary and boring.

My dealings with Sid were few and far between. He was trouble. I kept my distance. I was scared of him. He was tall, spotty, unpredictable—maybe I fancied him and wasn't aware of it—he was like the school bully, a gangly dangerous shadow.

Looking as I did, androgynous as I was, there was only one way I could defend myself; by giving 'the look', called by some friends as 'the voodoo vibe'—my defence mechanism. I would summon up gallons of, tons of hate/rage and pour it slowly through my eyes. It halted S.S.'s occasional bitchy remarks or Lynda's schizoid attacks. It didn't however stop me being beaten up by two drunk Scottish football supporters and a gang of Teddy boys, one ugly afternoon on the King's Road, it wasn't queer bashing, it was freak bashing.

Journalist Janet Street Porter had a weekly TV show on Sunday mornings called the *London Weekend Show*, a magazine programme about what was trendy in London at the time. We, the Bromley Contingent plus Sid Vicious, were invited to display our various hair colours. We would all go once a month or so to Vidal Sassoon's colouring shop on New Bond Street to 'model' and have our hair dyed any colour we wanted for free.

This one time I wanted my hair to be denim! The strange tinting creatures that worked there as colourists were brother and sister. Both looked like Richard O'Brien from the *Rocky Horror Show*, dressed in identical blue jumpsuits, they took one look at my blue/black head and said in unison, "We'll have to strip it to white first." I watched my hair go from black to grey to yellow to white and take on a cotton wool texture, enough to poison my brain—eight hours later, denim.

So we turned up at the South Bank TV studios. S.S., blonde crown of thorns; Steve, black on top, blonde at the sides like a bee, Simon's Bowie red and blonde, Simone's blonde hair/black girl and Sid's black spiky job.

We were ushered into the studio by a lot of clichéd luvvies and perched on long white oblong boxes. Three cameras swooped about, Miss Street Porter in a director's chair, rehearsing camera angles and autocue questions.

"What made you choose that colour?" and "What does your Mum think about that colour?" La. La. La.

Sid was sitting at the end of my box, picking his nose and spitting and fiddling with something that dangled from his lapel—a used tampon. Sid was mumbling over Janet's autocue rehearsal, then spitting and talking.

"What a load of bollocks."

"Oi, you shut up."

"Up yours!" Sid spat.

"I said fucking shut up," Janet hissed.

"Fuck off cunt!" Sid yelled.

“What ya call me?”

“A cunt,” said Sid and flung his tampon missile in Janet’s direction.

She ducked.

“Fucking wanker!” she screeched as the bloody tampon sailed past her ear.

It seemed to take hours and was boring as hell and, being a creature that only came to life at night, I felt totally exposed under the blaring studio lights. We had turned into ‘Punk’ specimens.

Three momentous events I was absent from:

1. The Bill Grundy incident.
2. The Screen on the Green gig.
3. The boat party.

I would come home and find my make-up kit dumped in the dustbin by my mother, covered in tea bags and potato peelings. I'd spend loads of dole money on make-up. It got to be very annoying. After the third time, she got a swift slap across the face and didn't dare try it again. It was like being robbed.

If I didn't "put my face on" I literally couldn't face going out.

Perhaps it was her way of trying to imprison me? Her pleas of "boys don't wear make-up" fell on my deaf ears. I had to carry my make-up with me at all times.

Anywhere I could, I'd take out my trough of powder and re-touch.

One night S.S. and I were on the train from Victoria to Bromley South, we got into a single compartment, at the end was a big fat businessman, drunk, asleep—a bloated pinstripe whale. S.S. and I sat there watching him in disgust, snoring and drooling, he'd even taken off his shoes and was stinking the carriage out.

As the train pulled into Bromley South...

"Hey Berlin, take one of his shoes!" S.S. ordered.

I hesitated, and then snatched one of the brown brogues, S.S. took the other.

We crept off the train not wanting to wake the fat banker baby, and then as the train pulled out, slammed the door, cackling hysterically down the platform.

Taking the train into town was an act of bravery and bravado, looking as we did. Most times we'd be in couples or in a pack. Other times alone.

I once had a retired Air Force captain try to chat me up, all twitching moustache, rubbing his hands over his knees muttering, "My God you're beautiful."

Of course by the way we looked, we wanted attention, the right kind. We wanted to cause an effrontery.

Another time S.S. and I were walking through the crowds at Victoria Station, the thronging hundreds all racing home from a hard day at the office—dear. In the middle of several hundred people, I dared her to scream. Picture this... a creature in black studded stilettos, black and red make-up, purple blonde hair, swinging her arms about like a demented Kabuki actor, the scream started low, then ascended and took in the cry of a peacock, a siren in the War, people stopped in their tracks to gasp at this vision.

If I couldn't get home, I could always try Lynda's place. Now that we had established a friendship, and the fact that her flatmate had buggered me, if I couldn't or wouldn't take the night bus home I'd walk to Lynda's. I would have to gauge her mood though.

Nearing dawn I rang her doorbell, after a while, Jordan answered it in a pink baby doll nightie and fluffy mules.

"Oh, Berlin," she said, keeping me waiting on the doorstep.

"I need somewhere to crash, do you think Lynda would mind?"

"My dear, you'd better come in," she teased.

I followed Jordan down the winding hall. She was a mound of pink chewed bubble gum.

"Are you living here now?" I enquired.

"Not really, I just stay here when I can't be bothered going back to Seaford," she declaimed.

I never knew quite what to say to her, she seemed as though she lived in another reality altogether, Herodias, in a Warhol movie at Tesco on the Old Kent Road. An enigma. Her manner, her pose, was strictly 'leave me alone, or else!' Imperious and deeply suburban. A dangerous combination.

I was standing in the doorway of Lynda's bedroom, it was entirely pink; carpet, curtains, lampshade, bedcover, all glowing, like a big cunt. The walls of the room were lined with large Oxo tins, Jordan caught me staring at them.

"That's my little homage to Andy Warhol," she cooed.

"What's in them Jordan?"

"Oh, just my accoutrements—whips, handcuffs, Mars bars, tampons, needles, that sort of thing," she said.

"Needles?" I squeaked.

"Yes dear, I like knitting!" she added drily.

I could hear the sound of breaking glass coming from another room.

"Those fucking cunts are trying to rip me off!" barked Lynda.

Broken glass on the kitchen floor.

“Careful where you tread!” Jordan whispered.

Lynda was standing legs and arms akimbo in her work gear, leather boots and leotard... the doors to all the kitchen cupboards were wide open, yawning in the dawn.

Lynda stared at me a second, her eyes blazing in anger and speed psychosis.

“They must think I’m fucking stupid, dear,” she snapped.

She picked up a Wedgwood Blue gravy boat and went over to the window and threw it out.

“Those cunts must think I was born yesterday!” I watched as the casserole dish followed the gravy boat.

Jordan was standing by Lynda over at the window.

“Well I just won’t work for them any more,” she sneered at Jordan.

“Fucking right,” Jordan nodded.

“And that cunt Caroline... just fucking wait...”

A Wedgwood cup went out, chased by a saucer.

I wanted to see where they landed and went over to the window.

“Berlin, David’s not here, dear,” Lynda growled through clenched sped-out teeth.

I was... disappointed? I liked David, after he fucked me he’d always buy me a packet of my favourite cigarettes—Kent Deluxe.

Dinner plates; one, two, three, four, five, six, were launched hitting the yard six floors below.

“Jordan, help me with this,” Lynda demanded.

Lynda and Jordan carried over a huge roasting plate and heaved it out. The loudest crash yet.

Lynda was exhilarated; her black eyes all a-swim, almost tearful.

“Oh well, off to Heals, Monday, to get a new set,” she said looking at me with a wicked gleam in her eye.

“Berlin wants somewhere to crash, dear,” Jordan piped up.

“Well David’s not here, you’ll have to share his bed with Helen,” she concluded.

I’d never shared a bed with a dwarf before.

So with all this activity going on, my relationship with my parents, particularly my mother, was becoming very strained. Not only had she been throwing my make-up away, I also knew she'd been reading my diary, the one that I'd stolen from Biba.

So when David asked me if I wanted to come and stay with him and his friend Janice at her apartment in SW15 for a few days, I accepted.

Janice knew Lynda, and through an agency did straight-sex work as a call-girl in London's top hotels. She was ordinary looking, red flicked up hair, slightly tubby, wore jeans and cowboy boots.

Her basement apartment was done out in Habitat. I'd met Janice a few times. She confided to me that a famous footballer, who was a client, buggered her so violently that she had to have her anus cauterised! It sounded fucking medieval to me.

"I bet it's nice getting away from your mum's?" she smiled sweetly.

Everyday around 4 p.m. she'd get a phone call and be told of her appointments for the evening.

I sat on the sofa watching her do her make-up, gazing at David, perhaps I was a little bit in love with him. He'd sit there, being all supportive to her, lighting her cigarettes.

"What time will you be back?" he asked Janice.

"Oh, around 11 p.m., unless I go for a drink after."

He gave me 'that look'. He told me before I arrived that he told Janice we were just good friends. She believed him?

"She mustn't know there's anything going on with us, or she'll freak," he warned.

Well that was difficult to do, seeing how smitten I was. We all did a few lines of speed. Janice went to work.

David went into the bedroom and called me in.

There he was laying over the bed, his limp cock hanging out of his red Fiorucci jeans. He had really pale skin. I took my mouth off his cock and it did a little spurt on

his stomach. He made a face. I slurped up the glob of spunk, like egg white and swallowed it. He made a retching sound. I needed the protein.

Days seemed to vanish along lines of speed, Janice got ready for work while we watched TV. Janice went to work, while we smoked cigarettes. I'd give him a blow-job. Janice came home.

"Janice, um, give me some money will you?" I heard David ask.

"How much do you want?"

"£50 will do."

"What are you going to spend £50 on David?" she enquired.

"Whatever I like, Janice."

"I suppose you're going to buy your 'chicken' something nice?" Janice snapped.

"What?"

"You heard, David."

They both went into the bedroom.

Janice came out dressed for work, ordered a cab, smiled at me and left without saying a word. David called me into the bedroom, blow-job time I thought.

"Berlin. Look, Janice found out about us, don't know how and it would be better... if you went back home..." he said, his eyes looking at the floor then up again at me. I must have looked like a startled deer.

"Sorry Berlin... I need the money, come here," he said softly.

With outstretched arms, "Give me a hug."

At Christmas I received a card from S.S. and Steve. It was a hedgehog in maid's drag by Beatrix Potter, coloured in with crayons so it looked completely demonic. The inscription read: 'To Berlin, the blow-job queen of the year, don't be silly get down the dilly.'

Lynda's apartment at St. James's Hotel became a haven in central London. A terminus where the strange peoples met.

One such creature that popped up was Vikki De Lombre.

She came to gossip, wore her hair in a dark brown pageboy, a piggish countenance, hidden behind enormous dark glasses that covered most of her face, podgy body in a man's pinstripe suit, court shoes and a patent leather shoulder bag.

Ms De Lombre would perch on the edge of Lynda's sofa and reel off a list of her political clients... she had a lisping affected upper class voice.

She was dubbed by one court judge as, "Leading a champagne lifestyle on beer money."

"I have to be very careful, the *News of the World* have offered me £15,000 for the story... I feel like Christine Keeler, darling. I mean Lynda, I'm in dangerous position, because the CIA could have me removed just like that, but I have enough to dish on that lot, dear." Ms De Lombre popped a pill between her shiny, glossy lips.

"Don't worry about them, Vikki, dear, I know some people who could help you out if push comes to shove," Lynda assured her.

"Expensive?" Vikki said chewing the inside of her cheek.

Ms De Lombre sat there on the sofa rattling all this off, not once speaking to me, not caring that I overheard it either, I wasn't a threat and she could always have me 'removed'—scary creature.

After she left...

"Lynda?"

"Yes?"

"Is Vikki a..."

“Yes he is, and one of the most dangerous queens around, my dear.”



Berlin in a Photobooth (Author's Collection)

Bowie came from Bromley. It was in places like Bromley, Harrow and Ilford that you got that particular social mix of

certainly, for that was tedious and middlebrow, but the dole queue, boredom, urban violence and perversity, plus a lot of incestuous

THE FANS. They came from suburbia. First to join in were the Bromley Contingent. All nice kids looking for something to do. Pictured here in December 1976 clustered around central blonde Souxie of Souxie and the Banshees

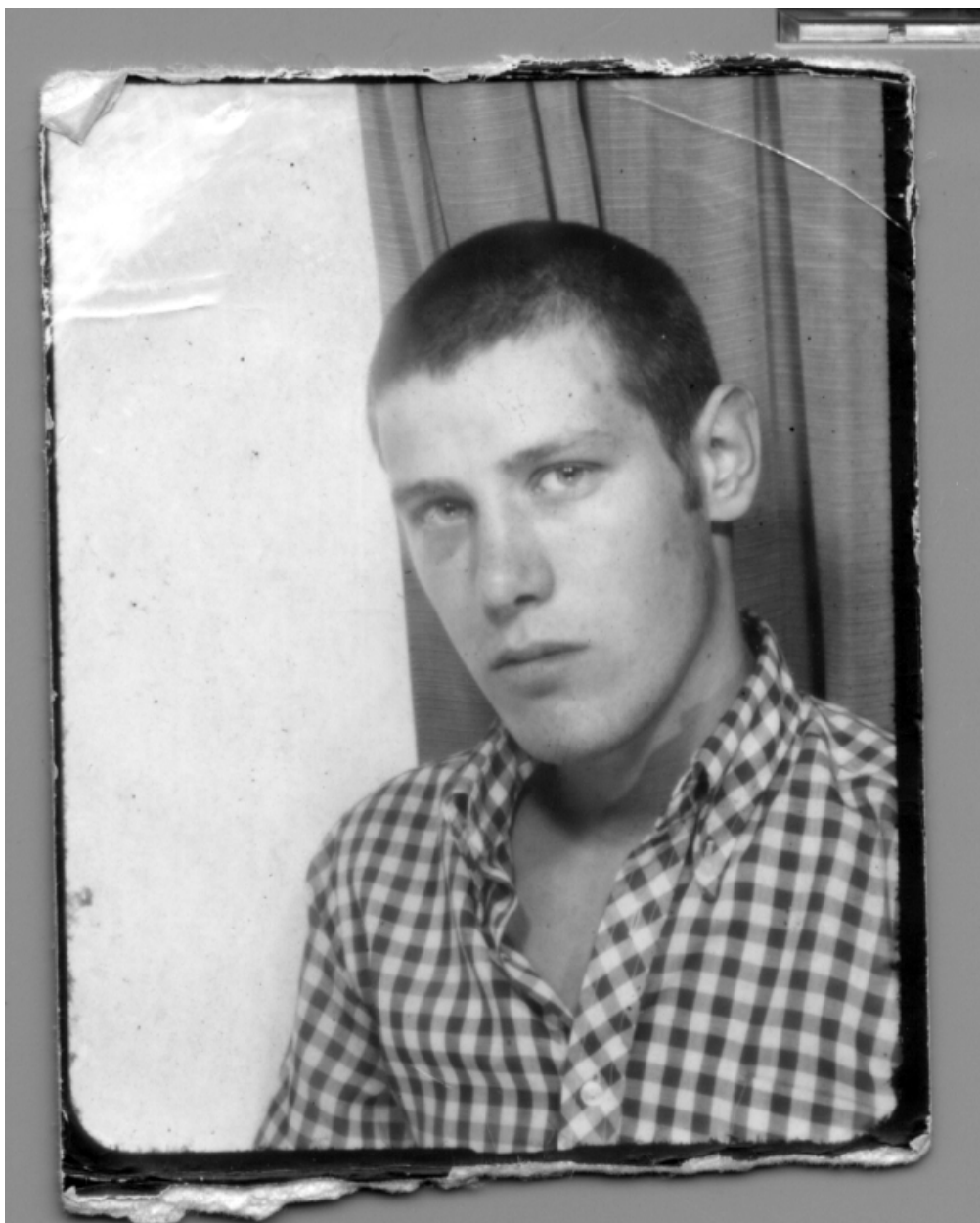


The Bromley Contingent (Author's Collection)



with JENNY RUNACRE "JUBILEE" Music by
JORDAN BRIAN ENO
LITTLE NELL ADAM AND THE ANTS
TOYAH WILLCOX WAYNE COUNTY
Produced by HOWARD MALIN and JAMES WHALEY SUZI PINNS
A MEGALOVISION FILM

Jordan in Jubilee (Author's Collection)



Martin (Author's Collection)



Bertie and Siouxsie (Photo credited to Nicola Tyson)



Bertie and Siouxsie (Photo credited to Nicola Tyson)

KING'S ROAD REVISITED—AUGUST 2003

In 1977, I lived at 92 Oakley Street, Chelsea. Today I stood outside; from the front window a Victorian rocking horse stared back at me.

Wandering down the King's Road, I stopped at the Picasso Café for a cappuccino. Mulling over twenty-five years.

Things change, some people are gone. I sat there thining, it seems like we're in a no time, where nothing culturally significant is happening.

I also thought about a friend of a friend who had just committed suicide, by putting a kitchen knife through his ribs and into his heart and cutting it in two. What did his world look like as he was doing that?

Memory is an odd thing, often I can't remember the name of a person I was introduced to five minutes go. But I can recall in excruciating detail events of twenty to thirty years ago. Short-term memory loss. Perhaps it's selective memory, a whole shoal of psychological terms.

Or is it boredom? The longer you live the more intrinsically dull everything becomes.



The situation at home was getting worse with my parents. My mother's and my nerves were getting to screaming point, it was very Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, and I was Bette of course. She'd been reading my diary and by now its contents would turn hair white. I'd taken to listing—by star sign, dick size, and general performance marks out of ten—blokes I'd gotten off with... i.e. Rod, Cancer, 6ins, rough and passionate.

One grey suburban afternoon, I was officially asked to leave. I packed two suitcases, one with my make-up in and another with clothes and my Teddy. I phoned some queens I knew who lived in west London and they said I could have a corner of a room in their flat for £8 a week (I got housing benefit).

Mother, all B-movie actress, crocodile tears.

“Where will you go?” Boo hoo.

“None of your fucking business,” and then I was gone.

The queens I moved in with were a mixed handbag.

I’d met them at Bangs, the club opposite Centre Point on Charing Cross Road. I bumped into them; they were like some queer Addams Family. Brian from Glasgow, ex-art school and seventies acid casualty, he resembled a tree struck by lightning in semi-drag.

Eddie, also from Glasgow and art school, huge, lardy and vicious, liked to think of himself as a cross between David Hockney and Joan Crawford, cruel tongue and far larger than life, promiscuous and damned as hell.

Jonathan, I think considered himself a warlock, Buddhist, learned gent and mystic. Richard was ex-Oxford grad and a checked shirt clone, and little Jimmy, a really rough rent boy, who was always pissed out of his head and getting fucked by all and sundry.

What an odd bunch they were, most of them were older than me and not of my generation, but that’s what happened then, it just happened. I became part of their little retinue.

It was scary but also great, at last to be out of Bromley, and the fucking suburbs, no creeping around, I could do my make-up without any tutting.

I could be Berlin twenty-four hours a day. Life at Russell Road, Olympia, was as to be imagined, a riot; drugs, dressing up, getting drunk, and sex.

One of the nearest gay bars was the infamous Colherne in Earls Court. In my make-up and garb I looked very out of place with the clone and leather element. I did, on one or two occasions, score. Across a really heaving bar, I saw a tall blonde, my age I guessed, not trendy not naff either, he kept looking over at me.

He smiled, stars fell, the sky ripped open. He motioned me over, I barged my way through the throng and there he was like one of the photos from my bedroom wall, Mr Blonde Apollo. Only problem seemed to be the big puffy queen he was with. G introduced him as Big Mac (pre-MacDonald's). Big Mac was native Aberdonian, recently escaped to London Town, sort of beauty and the beast. Big Mac seemed to have lots of money and bought all the drinks, G and I stared at each other; he had a sad, desperate look, as he flirted with me under the watchful eye of Big Sugar Mummy.

After the pub closed I was invited back to their basement flat in Earls Court Square. I sat on the sofa in a drunken stupor, while G and Big Mac disappeared into the bedroom. A while later Big Mac came out and said G wanted me to go in.

Lying in bed with the sheet pulled up to his navel, there he was in all his blonde, brown skinned beauty.

"Come here, Berlin," he said.

Duty called? No. He was perfect, a dream unfolding, I jumped under the covers to his huge erection and he asked if he could fuck me. I liked it when they asked.

David was tiny and knew what to do, G was huge and didn't have a clue. It was his first time; he sort of bumped away with all the finesse of a gravedigger.

I wondered, was Big Mac listening at the door? Probably.

The next day I went back to Russell Road with a really sore arse and in love. The queens all beamed at me, as though I were a baby at a christening. So my first proper love affair had begun, under the surveillance of Big Mac. I didn't understand their set-up at first. Dumb, dumb me. I thought G and I made a striking couple; he, tall, butch, blonde, green eyed; me, small, thin, dark eyes, dark hair, girlie.

We'd meet, get drunk, I'd get fucked, go home.

This went on for a while. Then one day G, *après* fuck, told me that he and Big Mac had to go back to Aberdeen for a while. There were a lot of phone calls between London and Aberdeen. Pleading with me to somehow get up to Scotland, he'd work it out with Big Mac. Romeo and Romeo had to be together again.

In a matter of days it was fixed. I'd snuck down to my parents' house while they were at work, smashed their piggy bank for £12 and took £30 out of my stepdad's wage packet hidden under the mattress. Enough money to get me to Aberdeen and some extra.

Domini was round at Russell Road; she'd become very friendly with Brian and Eddie. She'd just been released from Holloway women's prison after three months detention for stealing a pint of milk from outside a shop in Knightsbridge. She turned up to take me to the train station, wearing a pink pea coat and tap shoes, a face littered with beauty spots and heavily dusted with powder. Usually a monologist, three months inside had reduced her to a mumbling wreck.

We kept up a correspondence while she was inside; she was allowed to write one letter a week, all mail was censored...

"The ghost of Ruth Ellis is still about... I have to ration my cigarettes, I'm not speaking to anyone, and a lot of girls have tattoos... Berlin, look after yourself, you remind me of one of those finely etched crystal glass decanters, warding off evil spirits, yet fragile."

Domini put me on the train at King's Cross and waved goodbye. I watched London recede down a dark tunnel, to a fading spot, to a pinprick.

Inside I was torn. What would I be missing in London? My heart/arse ruled my head. I had just turned sixteen and heels over my shoulders in love.

Aberdeen in early 1977 was like being on another planet. There was something quite grand about it. It had a port, a beach, countryside surrounding it and a main street with great second-hand shops, plus some incredible Art Deco architecture. A favourite was the public baths. Big wooden rooms with enormous marble baths, water that ran straight down from the hills. Everything in Aberdeen was fresh; the water,

milk, bread, air. A stranger in a strange town, this was the furthest I'd been away from London in my life.

Big Mac installed me in a bed and breakfast. I stayed there alone. While they stayed with friends. I still hadn't caught on. So in lovely lust was I.

We discovered a bar in a hotel, sort of a 1950s lounge that had booths and a telephone on each table. The light went on our phone. I picked it up.

"Hello, is that the pretty boy?" said a voice.

Not quite sure who he meant.

"I'm the one with black hair," I said.

G was giving me daggers of jealousy, he could get extremely possessive.

"You sound a bit camp," the voice said down the line.

"I'm not camp, I'm theatrical!" I retorted.

"Hang up," G demanded, glint of total jealousy in his eyes.

"Here, talk to my friend," I said handing the phone to Big Mac.

I looked around the room and couldn't see whom I'd been talking to.

"Fuck off ya wee poofta!" Big Mac growled down the phone and hung up.

He was covering his tracks. I was suddenly told we were not in a gay bar. Everything was secretive. We'd dash from cab to bar to cab, in fear of being attacked because of the way I looked. It was dangerous and exciting, what I imagined Berlin to be like.

The only sort of gay sex to be had was in public toilets, homosexuality being illegal in Scotland at the time.

Then G got a job in a hairdresser's as junior stylist; so much had escaped my attention—he was a hairdresser? It meant he worked 8 to 10 hours day, leaving me in the charming company of Big Mac. He would ask me questions about G like "was I in love with him?" and when I said that G was in love with me (G had omitted to tell Big Mac that I was more than just a fuck—was I?) the rot set in.

We eventually moved to a tiny ground floor flat on the outskirts of Aberdeen on the Bankhead Road. I liked this address because of its association with Tallulah.

The days went like this... G came into my bed, we slept in two single beds, me in one and those two in another. Poor G must have been squashed to death. He crept into

my bed, fucked me in the arse, made his breakfast, went to work, Big Mac driving him in. We spoke briefly on the phone, he'd always sound annoyed.

I did some washing, hung out our underwear on the line, a teenage housewife. Big Mac would drive me into town, go to a café, wander aimlessly around, meet G from work, have a drink, eat haggis and chips, go home, G would take a shower, fuck me, go to sleep.

Suddenly the penny dropped, I was a fuck bag! The romance seemed to have burnt off. I was being treated like *merde*. I asked Big Mac to give me the train fare home. He half-heartedly tried to talk me out of it, the tension-slurping out of the mounds of his puffy pink flesh... the slobbering, slurping sound as Big Mac went down on G. That did it; I was on the next train to London. Did I want to call and say goodbye to G? I didn't want to interrupt him at work!

Later I found out that Big Mac was in fact on the run from the police, he'd done a bank a job, his share of the takings was £40,000. I got on the train and couldn't sit properly for the eight-hour journey because of the excruciating haemorrhoids I'd incurred.

I called G from a phone box when I got back to London, he thought I was at home on the Bankhead Road and got pissed off, then I dropped the bomb, I told him I'd left him and was in London and as the money ran out he sounded choked... the pips went... end.

* * *

For a few years after that I'd see G around, our eyes would meet, he'd flash me a look of deep loathing. He never spoke to me again. I must have really hurt him,

Oh well.

But what actually happened is that I wrote G's mother a very detailed letter explaining exactly what her 'Golden Boy' had been doing with me for the last few months and precisely who 'Big Mac' was...

I'd been away from London about seven weeks. The queens had given my space in the room to someone else. So I stayed with Simone who had moved out of Bromley and was living in another part of South London. I wasn't speaking to my mother.

Having to get back into the swing of things, I trotted up the King's Road and bumped into a swishy queen called Jon P. I mentioned I was looking for a room and he told me he knew of one going near Chelsea Fire Station, his friend Blanche was living there but moving to a room next door.

A few days later I went around to 92 Oakley Street to view the room. At number 89, Angie Bowie lived with pop singer Simon Turner. Occasionally David would be there. Although I never saw him. What a strange coincidence, Plaistow Grove and Oakley Street.

The room was on the first floor at the back of a Regency terraced house. Jon introduced me to Blanche—a stocky creature in cut-off denims and red leotard top with black hair in a bob and sallow skin—curled up on one of the single beds spooning yoghurt into her mouth. The window was open and a large tree poked its branches into the room.

“Do sit down,” Blanche said. She wasn't wearing any make-up, a bit fuzzy on the top lip; her hands were big with chipped nail polish on them.

Blanche was a pre-op transsexual.

“Jon says you'd like the room?”

“I'm really desperate,” I said.

“Yes, I can see that,” she quipped.

“How much is it?”

“£20 a week,” seeing my plucked eyebrow raise, she added, “Well it *is* Chelsea, dear.”

“I still want it, perhaps I could get someone to share it with me,” I mumbled.

“Do what you like, it’s available from Monday, one week’s deposit and one week in advance, £40 in case you can’t work it out.” Blanche shook my hand very formally and I said I’d tell her for sure by tonight.

Who could come up with £40? At the time Tracy was working in a shop on the King’s Road. I asked her; she was still living with her parents out in Biggin Hill and was desperate to get out. She got the cash by dipping her hand in the till. I could tell Blanche we were ready to move in.

Neither of us had much stuff to move, just clothes and make-up. Things just happened like that without much thought, we just did it; move in without a care for anything.

I took the bed under the window, Tracy on the other side. We had a single wardrobe and a chest of drawers. I put my pics up above my bed, Joe Dallesandro holding a baby over his baby’s arm, Judy Garland all tonsils, a Hollywood version of Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*, blonde Rocky from *Rocky Horror* (the model/actor, I found out lived around the corner from Oakley Street, I recognised his house by his sports car parked outside, I’d leave little messages with my phone number under his window screen wiper—alas he never called!), Little Nell doing Heidi, anonymous blonde beach bum.

Tracy covered her wall in (Hanoi) Jane Fonda, Vanessa Redgrave, posters from Pistols’ gigs, Che Guevara and other revolutionaries. A lot had been going on while I was away. SEX had been refurbished.

Wallpaper of a bombed-out Dresden and an inverted Piccadilly Circus, they renamed the shop:

SEDITIONARIES—CLOTHES FOR HEROES.

A new collection of clothes by Malcolm and Vivienne. Tracy and Little Debbie were working there alongside Michael.

And thus the legendary bondage look was born.

Dole, blow-jobs on rich Arabs and nicking money from my parents, I was still sneaking back and helping myself to my stepdad’s wage packet. I had enough money (with 10% discount) to buy a black parachute top, black bondage pants, and navy blue suede Spider-Man’s boots.

Vivienne saw me in the outfit and said I looked great and that she'd love to have some photos done (it never happened). I loved the way the trousers restricted the way one walked, tripping over constantly, you had to work out a way to wear them.

And those boots... peep-toed chequered in light grey... the clothes made you feel a part of a then exclusive set, they enhanced the way you felt, acted; they imposed an attitude.

Going into prostitution as a part-time job was now a necessity. I couldn't survive on dole cheques and thieving. Blanche worked the streets around Mayfair, Shepherd's Market. She was saving up for a sex change operation.

Drugs, booze, food—in the afternoon, breakfast time, I'd pop around the corner to the shop and buy the same thing every day; a pint of milk, one vegetable samosa, two chocolate truffles, a packet of Kent cigarettes.

Clothes from Seditionaries were expensive and I had to have new items. Vivienne said we should mix and match, i.e. forties woman's suit jacket worn with black bondage pants.

So several nights a week I'd join the gaggle of rent boys and whores up Shepherd's Market. I really did work the streets in my black bondage outfit; I threw a huge camel hair coat over the top and a face full of make-up. So my look was 'fem'.

Other boys did the leather jackets and butch look. I'd patrol the streets and if a gentleman gave me a look, I'd say, "Do you want business sir?" Yes, we were off. No, I carried on walking.

Number one rule in prostitution; get the cash first, otherwise you could get ripped off by a punter and there was nothing you could do about it. One of the essentials of prostitution was a having a constant supply of Glycerine Thymol mouthwash, which you got from the chemists, it looked like blackcurrant juice and tasted metallic. A 70ml bottle would last about ten days, each swill leaving the tongue and lips stained, giving a consumptive look.

I had to be very careful of the police, at sixteen I could get done for soliciting, sent to borstal with a lot of ruffians; heaven!

One night, I was standing under a street lamp with another rent boy and a car pulled up, an elderly man lent out of the window and beckoned us over.

The longer I did prostitution, the more drugs I needed to cope with it and the more divorced I became from my emotions—whatever they were at the time—love, lust, anger, rage, sadness, vacancy? I became numb. Speed in the afternoon, perhaps a Valium, more speed, then after work, depending on how many punters I'd done, I liked to do at least two (rare) then I'd go down to Louise's where the other 'working girls' would sit and wait for the drug dealer, who I called 'The Mandy Man'; a lump of lard in a pork-pie hat and two-tone suit who would come down to the club with a little attaché case full of pills. He'd sit at the back, near the toilets and one could go up and purchase. By this time after a few vodkas and lines of speed and sucking cock, I'd need something in the downer range.

If I could afford a Mandrax, I think he sold them for £1.50 a pill or a couple of 10mg Valium for the same price. I'd prefer Mandrax but even then they were getting quite rare. I'd do Librium on a bad night.

Prostitution wasn't glamorous whatever way you looked at it, performing sex on a lot of revolting old men. I shut down. Felt nothing, just performed to the best of my ability. It made me brittle.

We discovered another club. Sombrero's was on Kensington High Street and a very GAY Disco, owned by a pair of Spanish queens, it had a raised dance floor of multicoloured Perspex that resembled a boxing ring and had waiter service. A lot of Oriental and Middle Eastern queens went there, it was very faggy indeed, gold chains and sprayed hair, little leather clutch bags, rich older queens and their younger pickings. It was home in the early 1970s to the glam rock scene, Mr and Mrs Bowie.

One time Johnny Rotten was hero of the week down at Sombrero's, he intervened in a knife attack against one of the door staff, stopped the queen getting it in the gut, by kicking the assailant in the nuts!

Rudy, a rotund and chirpy Spaniard was the DJ, he played 70s disco. My favourite story that he told, was one night Marianne Faithfull came down and went to his DJ

booth on the look-out for free drinks; of course Rudy obliged. She repaid him by singing a drunken version of 'Little Bird'...

Even though hardly any of us lived in Bromley now, we were still known as The Bromley Contingent.

The Sex Pistols had appeared on the Bill Grundy show and were famous. Matlock had been fired, Sid installed.

Tracy had been seeing Mr. Jones and was completely obsessed by him, he was such a philanderer, his reputation for fucking anything female led to many a desperate hour for Tracy—he was a geezer, what could she expect—but at the time it was sad to see her so hurt by his every infidelity. She believed she could change him.

She'd come back to the room on Oakley Street, either with a big satisfied grin on her face or in rage or tears, depending on how it went with Jones.

Tracy was a trooper though, she embodied what came to be identified as 'punk' in its true spirit (we all did in our various ways) she didn't give a shit about anything, claiming in an act of anarchy inspired by McLaren, that she would chain herself to the railings outside of Chelsea Town Hall and blow herself up.

And at that moment when she said it, she totally meant it. She was full of Malcolm and Vivienne's ideologies and excited about making them a reality. She was a big fan of Baader-Meinhof. And whatever she got into, she was totally enthusiastic about it. It was infectious. I recall her saying to me, "You know Berlin, if you got killed tomorrow, I wouldn't care, I'd be upset but you know, I'd get over it."

I guess Mr. Jones being a young geezer didn't know what a good thing he had. He called her his 'moon on a stick'.

Tracy's look was very Mia Farrow in *Rosemary's Baby*.

Once she came back after a night with Mr Jones, looking very perturbed.

She sat on her bed frowning.

"Anything wrong, Tracy?" I ventured.

"Well Berlin, what do you think of this... you know Steve and Paul share that flat on Denmark Street."

"Yes?" I was all agog.

"Well... I found a tube of KY beside Steve's bed," lips pouted, raised pencilled eyebrow.

"So?"

She sort of stifled a giggle and bit her lip.

“Do you think Steve’s fucking Paul?” she asked, now sucking her finger like a teething baby.

“Umm, your guess is as good as mine,” I mumbled.

* * *

One day in a rage (precipitated by Mr. Jones) she went for me in a verbal assault.

She looked at the photos of Judy, Joe and Nell on my wall.

“Look at those pictures Berlin, those fucking prats you’ve got up there, they’re so pathetic,” Tracy said sitting on her bed, eyes blazing away.

“What do you mean?” I yelped.

“All those plastic fucking Hollywood scum, Judy fucking Garland, God what a victim, and Little Nell, she’s just a nobody, part of posey Andrew Logan’s lot, they’re so artificial.”

“Tracy how can you say that!” I was gobsmacked.

“Because all that lot are boring and a waste of time, and you’re a weak victim, like them, they’ve contributed nothing.” She was really on one, biting her nails and smoking furiously, between bouts of bile.

“Malcolm and Vivienne and the Pistols are the only ones doing anything relevant or of any importance,” she hissed.

“But Tracy, people like Judy were real rebels in their time.” I tried to defend Judy and myself but I could feel I was slipping.

“No, they’re fucking redundant, old has-beens,” she barked.

This tirade reduced me to tears, on my bed, blubbering.

“Look I’m not sorry for what I said, just think about it, really fucking think about it,” she sighed.

Tracy had started hanging out with our new neighbours the American band the Heartbreakers. I never knew them, well only by name: Johnny, Jerry and Walt.

Tracy would spend a few nights over there, taking smack and handing them purloined T-shirts from the shop.

Domini had moved into a squat in Clapham North with Eddie, the artist who lived at Olympia. A first floor flat that had no furniture in it besides a single mattress in Dom's room and double in Eddie's. A record player and table in the living room.

Domini had hung colour Xeroxes, in green and pink, of Jane Birkin and Joe Dallesandro arse-fucking from Serge Gainsbourg's film *Je t'aime Moi non Plus*. Plus rolls of 8mm film that were pinned and unfurled onto bare floorboards.

Dom had borrowed a 8mm camera and had filmed me breezing around Kew Gardens in my oversized trench coat and long black scarf, standing enigmatically outside the Pagoda, laying down, my face framed by dead leaves.

The film had no sound, yet I recited a monologue that she'd written, about 'jewelled fingers and dying fools'... we wanted to do something like a Warhol or Cassavettes film and it ended up pretentious and incomprehensible.

Domini and I stayed up one night and spun into outer space—we'd taken loads of speed—Patti's *Radio Ethiopia* on the player with the arm over so it repeated and repeated, the soundtrack to that night, that year...

Domini in pink cashmere, jeans and white stilettos; me in black bondage gear, wandered from room to room.

"Every woman is a vessel, evasive, is aquatic, hey Venus, eclipsing my way," Patti droned as Domini wound rolls of 8mm film around herself.

"I'm going to be a celluloid mummy," she giggled.

This speed was strong and my brain—fireworks, I had nothing to wrap myself in as I stood watching the 12-inch record go round and round, the black grooves hypnotising me. "Silver disks spinning in space." I was in-sync with Patti, I loved the way a combination of music and drugs did that, connected everything up...

Domini had nearly mummified herself in rolls of 8mm.

She stood in the middle of the room, clicking her heels together.

"I can be any film I want," she said. I wanted to clean something.

I found a magic marker pen and started colouring in the skirting board.

“Look Berlin, this bit is of you in Kew Gardens,” Domini held up a piece of film. I’d never seen the film because she didn’t have a projector, but I saw myself in the tiny frames she pulled through her hands.

She suddenly started having a coughing fit.

“I think... I...” sputter sputter, “I think... I’ve swallowed...” Her eyes bulging, clawing at her throat.

“I’ve SWALLOWED A RAT! ART RAT RAT ART,” she stood there throttling herself, trying to push the ‘rat’ up her neck, into her mouth.

At first I thought she was joking, as I couldn’t see anything in her throat.

She was now on her knees choking, I thought she was interpreting a Patti lyric, and then she pulled her mouth wide apart... trying to get it out... she lay on the floor wriggling. I stood there in utter shock.

Wiping saliva away from her mouth, she managed to speak.

“I think ‘they’ve’ put it in there.”

They?

MY MARTIN

It was at Sombrero's on my 17th birthday that I met Martin McDonald.

A few months before I'd gone to a tarot reader who told me that I'd meet someone with the initials M.M. who would be very good for me. For a moment, I thought it was Malcolm McLaren!

There I was on the dance floor, black bondage gear and black leather stilettos that I'd bought from the *Cafe de Paris* strip club's closing-down sale, I also bought a pair in gold and silver.

I was drinking champagne out of one of the shoes with Jordan, when over the heel I saw this young bloke in T-shirt and jeans, cropped hair, lean muscled, green eyes that were staring at me. I toasted him with a shoe. He smiled. I wobbled onto the dance floor, my eyes on him, with one shoe on; Jordan was still drinking from the other one.

"Dance with me," I slurred.

"Oh, I thought you were a bird," he said.

I wiggled my hips at him. We danced. He was beautiful and rough; green eyes got me lost every time. Jordan was watching bemused.

"Mart-in."

"Berlin."

"What?"

"My name's Berlin."

This happened every time; people couldn't handle me calling myself after a city and always wanted to know my real name.

"Pinocchio," I snapped.

He disappeared off the dance floor. I wiggled alone. Then he came back.

"I'm sort ov wiv someone," he said and nodded at some chap at the bar.

"But see ya outside in a bit?"

"Maybe?" I said and gave him a peck on the cheek.

Of course I was hooked. No one else was getting him.

Outside, Martin was standing with this guy beside a Rolls-Royce.

I tottered over. Martin and I were locked, eye-to-eye.

The other guy—Dennis—said to Martin that they should be going.

Martin suggested I come along for a drink. We went back to Dennis's flat off Sloane Street. Ah, perhaps Martin was a rent boy too?

Once inside Dennis cracked open champagne. Martin and I sat on the sofa. Dennis clucked about, trying to get Martin into the bedroom. We kept smiling at each other. The atmosphere got very tense.

"Martin," Dennis said, "time for bed?"

"Nah."

"I mean, are you going to stay the night?"

"What do you think Berlin?" Martin asked, giving me my cue.

"Oh, Martin's coming home with me, aren't you?"

"What!" Dennis exclaimed, crestfallen.

"Well, Berlin and I 'ave more in common, ain't we?"

With that we got up, leaving Dennis purple with frustration and green with envy. Into the night we went, up the King's Road to Oakley Street, Martin giving me a piggyback all the way.

We didn't fuck that night; he wrapped himself around me in the single bed and fell asleep. I stared at his shoulder at the rose and yellow tattoo, at his broken nose, his front tooth missing. He was such a bloke. Ex-Navy, ex-boxer and thief, just out of detention centre. At nineteen he was pure Jean Genet.

One of the scariest things of 1977 for me was Jordan's new look. She disappeared for about two weeks, didn't go to the shop, she stayed at Lynda's and invented a new face.

I saw her coming out of Sombrero's one night, her face divided into black lines and shaded in dark pink over her left eye, cheek and temple on the right side, like a Cubist painting, her hair in sprayed stalagmites, in full black bondage, jacket and pants.

She begun to manage a new band, Adam and the Ants, and got a lead part in Derek Jarman's film *Jubilee*.

Jordan also featured in the Ants; she did a song with them as guest vocalist, ‘LOU’ was so great. I saw them at the Marquee Club... she came on stage like a demented housewife in grey cashmere twinset and pearls, full-length brown rubber skirt... she screamed at the top of her lungs, swallowing the microphone “Annnnddddyyy Wrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrhollllllllllllllllllllllll, no tribute to you no, no, no,” screaming till she nearly asphyxiated herself.

Jordan pelted by tons of spit, I watched as it slowly dribbled down her rubber skirt. She spotted one guy and shook her fist. He did it again. Mid-scream, she picked up the microphone stand and twirling it around in the air, crashed it down on the idiot's head. I saw him buckle and sink to the floor.

“No. no. no,” she went on screaming.

Good old Jordan.

Odd thing about prostitution was it seemed to be catching; Blanche, Jon. P, me, now Little Debbie and Tracy were doing it, parading up and down Park Lane, outside the Hilton Hotel. What a bizarre and exotic pack of whore hounds we were.

My move to Chelsea meant I saw less and less of S.S. and Steve, their band was gigging around. I went to see them at the Roxy, the club in Neal Street, Covent Garden. The Roxy was the first 'Punk' club, situated in what was originally Chagarama's, the trannie bar. It had all the charm of a flooded toilet. It was run by Andrew Czezowski and his wife Sue—this pair were a sort of wanna-be McLaren and Westwood.

S.S. and Steve played there a few times. S.S. had perfected her arm-swinging and goose-stepping, sweeping hiccup vocals, pouting and saluting. Her delivery was very dramatic as though she was going to explode any minute, unleash her wrath on the audience. Steve in contrast was aloof, the bass guitar looked almost too big for him. All their songs were fast and furious, about glamour, death, murder and suburbia.

The guitarist and drummer looked like boy versions of S.S., pretty and vicious, gorgeous and cruel.

My friendship with Siouxsie and Steve went into a series of eclipses for the next few years. A huge change happens when someone close, a friend, becomes famous. They went into another orbit, while I was left behind. What happens is a period of adjustment. And I wouldn't be honest, if I didn't admit that I was tiny bit jealous; envious even? Yet on balance Siouxsie and Steve were several years older than me and had a very strong idea of what they wanted. I, on the other hand, had only a vague notion; glamour and fame had to be involved, but what exactly did I want to be?

And some friendships stand up to the test of time, as has happened with Siouxsie and Steve. We still have that silent eye-contact; one look and we know what's what with each other. Particularly with Siouxsie, it's a cat thing, a witch thing, and a 'familiar' thing.

In fact the whole 'scene' was very different, now labelled by the music press as PUNK ROCK.

Club Louise had been letting the riff-raff in—Madame Louise making pots of money. Journalist Caroline Coon did a big splash in the *NME*, letting everyone know where the Pistols and entourage hung out. So the flotsam and jetsam had drifted in. We now only went on the week nights when the punk cattle had to be at their jobs the next day.

The only places that weren't contaminated were the few old gay bars like The Show Place in Westbourne Grove and Sombrero's. The 'Punks' were put off going to exclusively gay bars, they went to the Roxy or Vortex.

Violence erupted at most places, it didn't have an edge to it or beauty, it was just dangerous and put me off.

It wasn't where I wanted to spend my after hours getting pissed and drugged with a load of safety-pinned naffs.

SNAPSHOTS—LYNDA’S LIVING ROOM, ST. JAMES’S HOTEL

Jordan in her pink baby-doll nightie came crashing into the living room, high-kicking and stomping around, jabbing with an invisible trident the air in front of her, she was practising her dance routine for Derek Jarman’s movie *Jubilee*, in which she mimes to a version of ‘Rule Britannia’. One time she high kicked you caught a glimpse of her fanny, with one kick she knocked over one of Lynda’s vases. I was sitting on the sofa, as she goose-stepped and Seig Heiled back and forth in front of the windows.

“Shall I show you how Lyndsay Kemp takes a bow?”

She needed no encouragement, Jordan exited the room, then came back in, skipping, it was something, seeing this small, sixteen-stone woman in a pink baby-doll and fluffy mules, skipping, then miming very slowly, taking a bow.

I broke into polite applause.

The curtseying and bowing went on and on. And on and on.

Adam Ant, in black-rimmed glasses, kiss curl and black eyeliner, darting into the room wearing only white Y-fronts, asking if I’d like a cup of tea. He was eager to show off the ‘Ant Alphabet’ he’d invented. I feigned interest, whilst Adam wiggled his hips and did little pelvic thrusts and recited the following, or at least as best as I can remember it:

A is for anarchy and art.

B is for bondage and blusher.

C is for cruelty and come.

D is for Dirk and disaster.

E is for ecstasy and erection.

F is for fuck and forever.

G is for guns and G-strings.

H is for heroes and Hitler.

I am for incest and ice.

I went to the Colherne pub in Earls Court one night. I used to see this very beautiful blonde boy around, about my age. I knew he worked as a dancer for a TV troupe—the Second Generation. We knew each other as nodding acquaintances. Terry with green eyes, spelt trouble.

This night he was with a big-built chap, leather jacket, dyed blonde hair with really piercing blue eyes, handsome and older than Terry. His name was Terence.

TNT. He was an actor, recently on TV playing a Nazi officer. Vodka and speed for me. Tenants Super lager for them.

I wound up back at their apartment somewhere in Baron's Court. I had a big crush on Terry. We sat about smoking joints. They went off to bed and I crashed out the best I could on the couch. Off with my bondage pants, I lay there in my cowboy T-shirt, trying to sleep. I nodded off.

Woken abruptly by the living room door bursting open, TNT stood in the doorway, in full S&M leather gear, cuffs, whips, chains etc... Terence led the way over to me, I was looking at them bleary-eyed...

"Handcuff the bitch," he commanded Terry. They were buzzing on coke or speed. I couldn't do anything. I was pushed onto my belly, my hands cuffed behind me.

"OK, fuck that hole," Terence bellowed.

I could see Terry out of the corner of my eye, his blonde fringe falling over his wild eyes, hesitating.

"I said, fuck that hole!" Terence barked again.

Terry in a leather jock strap and jacket, motorcycle boots. He got on my back, I could feel his cock throbbing against my bum, sound of spitting, and he shoved it in. I was confused.

I was getting fucked against my will by someone I had a crush on.

"I want to see it go in and out," Terence growled, standing over us, his prick conducting the proceedings.

I felt Terry's cock swelling inside and then as he came he whispered quietly in my ear, "Sorry, sorry." He got off, I could see him trembling. I felt his cum running down my thighs. Terence's turn. I didn't want him in there. He fell like a tree on top of me, his cock was enormous. Terry looking lost and helpless. I clenched my teeth and arse to tell him 'No entry'. He did the perfunctory arse slapping. Then yanked my arse in the air. I squeezed tighter.

"Come on you little bitch," he snapped.

"Stop, stop!" Terry pleaded.

Terence went right ahead, forced himself in... it hurt. I bit the cushion, he only managed to get it halfway in.

Probably my make-up was smudged. Terence finished and went into the other room.

I lay there. Terry sat beside me.

"I'm so sorry Berlin, he made me do this, I'm so sorry," he had tears in his beautiful emerald eyes. He leaned over and gave me a long hug, we were both shaking. Terence called from the bedroom. Terry sloped off. I searched my pockets and found a Mandrax, why I didn't leave there and then I don't know, the Mandrax kicked in and I couldn't.

I forgot all about this for years. I painted it—blackout.

‘THE VULTURE BOOKS’

All through 1977 I kept a series of black Moleskine notebooks.

I hadn’t looked at these diaries/journals in nearly thirty years. The first one was exclusively about Martin; on the following pages are some extracts, unedited, in all their squeaky, embarrassing, naivety. I was only sixteen.

23rd.

My journal begins with a head cold. I tried to get to the phone box to call Martin. But my concentration was fucked. When romance is in the air, I go out and suffocate in it. I’m listening to Peggy Lee’s record ‘Mirrors’ and I’m thinking, hoping that I’ll be laying besides that scarlet tattoo tonight.

Sometimes I think about what might happen or not in the future, that I completely forget about what is happening now. Too much sulphate?

My first fuck with Martin.

Beautiful faded scar beneath his left eye, childlike face of despair, unsure of his masculinity, a body of a battered changeling, me? His spasm, his load, his tiny bed which I fell off like a broken doll, he hauled me off the floor, his front—my back, deep penetration, shiver inside, side of his face against mine for such a short time—sensations of skin on skin, panting, damp patch...

We danced a slow smooch around his mum’s front room. arms around his neck, my sailor boy... a piano tinkles away... sorrowful tune spilling lies... his tummy ripples of golden sand.

Fear is the whirlpool of emotion in the height of sex.

My sailor boy comes.

White sheets turn grey, floating over misty seas, amber burning, his skin peeling, sun slipping away... I am rotting on the sand, scarlet rose petals of his tattoo between my fingers.

Four of my favourite moods:

1. Melancholy.
2. Passion.
3. Thoughtful.
4. Dreamy.

Is adolescence hell, or is it me?

Parched teenage ribs.

Piles are the price you pay for a hot night of passion.

I think a lot of this writing is bad... but the mistakes are good.

Martin gave me a love bite that swelled up and bled, I'm going to be very sad when it's gone. Simone told me not to worry, I might get another one.

24th.

Martin's face gets punched and battered to yellow and purple bruises, leaving scars, which I trace with my finger covered in spit.

27th.

It was like shitting backwards, it meant nothing coz it was nothing—sex with George the boxer. Martin in a burning bush of green, fractured jaw, broke the tarnished teeth of an old queen... he left them mayhem... Then nestled and kissed my neck and folded his arms about me... it's always so hard to get him to kiss me.

The bare necessities:

1. Notebook.
2. Kent cigarettes.
3. Vodka.
4. Brown canvas bag.
5. Make-up.

We went to a party, boozing, his head on my lap in a drunken snooze, eclipsed green eyes stubbed with fair lashes, smoky black smudges under his eyes, he looked sad, sleeping off a fight... how to understand the touch of his hands.

Martin said goodbye with a smooched kiss and a rolled up newspaper (*The Sun*) under his arm; a stolen watch around his thick wrist.

“He who loves the best, who fears his love is false.”

Discovered another love bite—what a surprise.

Everything today looks like it's been Xeroxed.

28th. My Hairdresser.

Nicky is my hairdresser—he works at Vidal Sassoon's, Bond Street. We get on really well, even though he's straight, he doesn't look it. He's blonde, skinny, and a pretty rat. We talked about clubs and laughed.

I used to be really infatuated with him, but now I just like him as a friend. I have Martin anyway.

I think about Martin all the time. But he's always somewhere else.

Oh, well, I've got Nicky my hairdresser. I'm going to think about him, instead of pining away for Martin.

In fact, I'm really ecstatic about Nicky being my hairdresser; it's been the event of the day, Nicky being—my hairdresser. I mean I didn't intend to fall for my hairdresser, even though like Martin, he's been in and out of Borstal.

31st. My Birthday.

I'm lying in bed, smoking my Kent Deluxe cigarettes, reading Gertrude Stein, and listening to Judy Garland. I feel happy.

1st.

Visited the dentist today, he pumped 20mg of Valium into my arm, and removed a tooth. I woke up all bloody mouth and didn't know where I was. I found this scribbled note in the back of a book....

WHAT WAS IN TALLULAH BANKHEAD'S HANDBAG.

Handkerchief,
Lipstick,
Saint's medal,
Rabbit's foot,
2 packs of Craven 'A' cigs,
Foreign coins,
Various pills.

2nd.

Last night by accident I met Martin in a bar—we went to a party and got very pissed and stayed at a friend's house.... he fucked me again... some of my friends say he's a bit rough... the next day we went to Green Park, still drunk and fell asleep.

I was drying off from being pushed into the fountains at Trafalgar Square, I was too smashed to give a fuck.

Martin lost his temper; he smashed the watch I gave him. It was my real father's watch with a black face. That made me feel sad. He says he's going to buy me a dog—I want a Yorkshire terrier. But I think he's getting fed up with me, hope not...

I NEVER WANT TO BE SIXTEEN AGAIN.

In the morning he sneaked off without saying goodbye... I dashed to the bus stop, where he was smoking a fag... bastard!

3rd.

I haven't heard from Martin—so I've written him a poem, which I might send:

Tears fall upon a tatty satin pillow,
I am found lying face down,
suffocating, without your love,
Your air
Leaving me alone, stormed by despair...
I can't stand it without you, like rain
splashing on my face, your lips, that have

tasted blood, cigarettes, booze, my name.

I don't know whether to send this or not, maybe I'll send him a Dorothy Parker poem:

The sun's gone dim,
The moon's turned black
I loved him
And he didn't love back.

Is that too bitchy?

Oh, I want to be Andy Warhol!
I want to be an empty tin of Vim.

9th.

Dream of Jordan last night, in a black catsuit... we were in Berlin, shooting a film, it was an assassination scene, we were looking in a shop window at naked mannequins, we killed the victim and Jordan ran off down a street, I watched as a black box closed in, darker, darker...

15th.

Nicky dyed my hair red; it looks better than the damson. I wish I could stop thinking about Martin... memories flick about when he said the other week, "I'll be five minutes"—he lied—I saw him standing at the bus stop. Last time.

17th.

Poem...

The sun's gone, it's him,
The moon is out but very dim,
Yet my hand you kissed and
we laughed at this.

22nd.

Visited W in hospital—she looked healthier, but weird with her white hair and custard coloured skin, like a dolly in a nightmare.

Rumour had it that her dad was smuggling in smack for her.

Then I visited Kathy at her painting studio on Shaftesbury Avenue. Kathy is having a fling with W's dad and he's treating her really badly.

Then Domini told me she'd fucked W's dad and gave him the clap!

And I said to Kathy, that I don't think he likes me at all, whenever I've met him he made me feel really nervous.

Kathy said it was because he couldn't understand why I was getting all this attention. He said to her that he couldn't see the point of me! And she also told me, "He keeps a couple of horses in stables at Newmarket, and they're not for racing!!"

It's odd that I'm a friend of someone who has a title, Lady Kathy. She looks great, a cross between Patti Smith and Jane Birkin.

Spooky, her squirrel monkey, seemed to like me, he jumps around free range, I was scared of him shitting on me.

We talked and talked and went for a walk in the middle of the night in Smithfield Market to view all the corpses. I like the smell of fresh flesh.

28th.

I sat in Patisserie Valerie on Old Compton Street today, drank black coffee after black coffee. I was the last one in there. They asked me to leave.

Finished reading William Burroughs' *WILD BOYS*.

2nd.

Whoops, spent my first night in jail, well a few hours really. I picked up this stupid old businessman at Sombrero's and he invited me back to his hotel in Bayswater.

Well, I was pissed and went even though he was as ugly as sin. His room small and posh and when he was in the toilets, I went through his things and found £200 in his wallet, which I grabbed and left. I got to the lift, when the old bastard got hold of me and pushed me about, I got away and ran to the toilets, stuffing some money down my pants and the rest—£140—down the loo.

The hotel manager called the police and I was taken to Kensington Police Station and put in a cell. I had three Mandrax on me, which I swallowed because I thought they might arrest me for drugs as well as stealing and soliciting. I could hardly keep my eyes open during the questioning.

I told them my age and that he offered me money for sex. They let me go, being that I was under age. I got a cab home. It was 5.30 a.m.

9th.

Sent Martin a telegram today saying, "M, missed you again."

10th.

Martin called to say that he found the telegram shocking.

13th.

Listening to Billie Holiday. Black coffee, cigarettes... I don't know how to make my dole cheque last... I'm so miserable... It's all Martin's fault.

19th.

Dear M,

I wanted to write "Darling", but I know it would make you snigger. I've been trying to communicate with you for ages and not been successful—how can I communicate with a grizzly bear, pissed out of his head? I must apologise for my messy handwriting, there's a fly buzzing around this room, and it's driving me crazy, but that's not the reason my writing's so bad... I'm not good at writing and spelling... I was terrible at school...

I was interested in pictures and thinking about them... Oh, I'm not being very clear... I'd have to be as clear and basic as a house brick before you'd understand...

I don't know if you recall my birthday last week? You said you'd take me out somewhere, when you didn't turn up, I just went home with a bottle of brandy, trying not to feel like I'd been stood up—I thought, "Oh well, these things happen," and then you promised to buy me a little dog and yes I know you did...

Martin, I bought a lead and basket with my dole and now I feel stupid with them sitting in the corner, it's like I have a dog... But you don't phone so what am I

supposed to do? Just turn up somewhere central like London Zoo or Piccadilly and hope that you'll come by with some gorgeous snivelling pup in tow? I know that's silly and remote but it's the sort of thing you would do... just turn up and smile like a boxer dog.

Yeah and you know what I'd do? I'd fucking kick you in the balls and push that little puppy under the nearest bus—puppy crushed.

I wonder if you've got this far in reading the letter. I wonder if it isn't in a dustbin in tiny bits by now. You know before I met you, which was one year ago last week, I was quite sane... I don't sleep, I sit up thinking about a number of things, mostly me and you, then you and me, and then just you, then I try hard not to think about anything at all, which is the hardest thing to do—it usually means I've fallen asleep... and dreaming about you... why don't you write or call, even if it's just to tell me... it's up to you, because if it was up to me, I would....

bye, love,

PS. I won't send this.

9th.

It's been a while since I wrote in this book... I discovered, thanks to Martin's mother, that he has a girlfriend. I called him last Friday and his mother answered, she sounded posh, which is weird coz they live on a council estate. She told me he was away with Lisa, for the weekend. Lisa. "Who the fuck is LISA?" I wanted to yell, but didn't, I just said, "Please tell him I called." She sounded gleeful.

Who is Lisa? Why is he with her and not me? Bitch. Bastard. I hope she's got the clap! Yeah I hope she gives him the clap.

Perhaps it's all over?

10th.

I've been so miserable and listening to Billie Holiday, drinking brandy and nicking my mum's sleeping pills. Then I'm stoned all day long. W is out of hospital, looking less egg yoke. I went to her flat and she sold me some 'blues' and they've perked me up a bit. She can be a cow! I told her all about Martin and she said that perhaps he's not 'queer' at all.

13th.

Mum accused me of nicking her sleeping pills—bitch! Martin called today—hooray! Going to meet him tomorrow.

15th.

Met Martin last night in the William IV pub in Hampstead. He was with that hideous Scottish queen Joe, butch queen I should say. They were playing pool and Martin sort of ignoring me, being a lad with Joe, but Joe ain't no lad, he's got to be at least forty. I don't know why Martin likes him.

I arrived there and Martin was with some queen who was all over him, that really pissed me off. 'It' was acting as though it was his boyfriend – poor thing had such terrible skin, like gravel.

I got so angry I shouted, "Hey! Velcro face, he's mine, not yours, piss off, I mean with skin like that you shouldn't be seen in the light," that made Martin laugh. I said to Martin, it's me or 'It'. He laughed again coz he could see I was ready to kill and he'd never seen me like that before.

"Go on, tell old pizza-face there to sling its hook," and like the gent he is, he did, poor little queen went bright red, scaly-faced and ran out of the pub.

When I was in the loos, I would always go into a cubicle whether I want to shit or not. I don't know what made me do it, but I started to mark my arm with the aid of my front door key, made track lines, so it looked as though I'd been shooting smack.

I mean, I'd done it once with W, she insisted I shoot it, otherwise it would be a waste, it was called something like 'Chinese rocks'. I was so scared of needles, so she had to do it for me, it felt like sex and death... W got sort of horny seeing the needle going in.

I broke the skin with the key and it really stung, it looked real enough, wisps of blood.

Back in the bar, I sat very quietly rubbing my arm, while Joe and Martin were playing pool... it took Martin about 15 min to twig something was up, I sat there pretending to nod out... He made me roll up my sleeve, found track marks.

He flipped, I denied it, he got on one and really had a go at me, calling me a stupid fucker, and he said if he ever caught me doing it, he'd kill me.

I loved it, although it was a bit scary when he and Joe took the piss and called me ‘Scag head’. I was happy he cared. Although later on, he told me that his best friend at school had died from a smack overdose. I felt awful—not really though.

After the pub we went back to Joe’s flat, which was dull in the extreme, except Martin sat me on his knee in the kitchen. I think the hideous Joe was angling for a threesome—the very thought even now makes me want to emigrate to Canada. We went to the spare room; bare light bulb, no bed, just a pile of dirty looking duvets lumped on the floor and some tatty cushions.

Martin stripped quickly and dived under the covers; smoking a cigarette, smoke curling around his head like a halo. I did a slow striptease, first my boots, then bondage pants, until I was aflame in my red leotard, Martin said, “I’m going to fuck you all night.”

I slipped off the leotard straps and dashed under the filthy covers.... Martin’s body always so warm.... I could hear Joe playing Minnie Ripperton’s ‘Loving You’ in the other room. I sucked him for a while, until he got restless and pulled me up... he doesn’t like kissing, which is really annoying, sad.

He then rolled me onto my belly and pushed my legs apart with his, on top of me and without spit, he pushed himself in, it was so painful without lubrication, but I really loved it, him being in there, he was gentle at first then I don’t know what happened, his mood changed and he was really rough, he slammed into me, pulling all the way out and rammed it... in to the hilt, in and out till my body was tingling and shuddering, he was doing push-ups.... I felt so stoned like I was on smack or something. It was burning down there, it hurt so much, I asked him to stop, but he wouldn’t, he kept slamming into me, I was skidding across the floor, carpet burns. I’m sure ugly git Joe was listening at the door, wanking, no doubt.

Martin came, biting my neck; he rolled onto his back, let out a sigh, his body all shiny with sweat. I was just a wobbly mess, my body had gone into spasms, I felt like I was going to pass out, was this a swoon? I felt as though my insides were going to explode onto the carpet. I dashed to the loo and farted out Martin’s spunk, which was a shame, cause I wanted to keep it up there as long as possible; a souvenir.

I was scared because I couldn't stop shaking, teeth chattering, and legs numb. Tingling.

I was fucked, dazed and gone to ga-ga.

23rd.

Last night lying in bed counting Martins trying to get to sleep, hoping to see him in my dreams, I remembered when I was seven or eight; I used to spend the summer holidays at my grandparents' house on the Norfolk coast. The summers really did seem endless. Days on the beach, walking my Nan's collie dog called Poggy.

One late afternoon I was walking with Poggy along the cliffs, towards the lighthouse, wrapped in my Nan's rabbit fur coat and smudge of lipstick smeared across my mouth, candyfloss in hand... Poggy pulling me along like a queen in a chariot.

A car drew up, a teenage couple in fifties Teddy boy gear, wound down the window and beckoned me and Poggy over... smell of hair grease, pinkie smiles, pale hand on leather steering wheel, the boy offered me a mint, the girl a crooked smile.

"Want to come for a ride, little boy?" she said.

The pier lights came on... the boy wore a gold cross around his neck... shadow of rain clouds on the sea... in the back of a car, Poggy looked nervous as I asked, "Where are we going?"



Another dawn, standing at Lynda's front door.

"There's no room Berlin; Nils and Debbie are in David's room, Sharon and Simon are crashing on the sofas... you could crash in the kitchen."

I followed Lynda into the kitchen, graffiti over the walls, sink filled with days-old washing up and a small bed plonked against one wall, the bed covered in fur rugs and coats, poking out of one of the coats was a shock of blonde ringlets.

"You could crash there," said Lynda pointing to the bundle of furry rags.

"What's that?" I said, pointing...

"Well dear, it's Nancy, she's completely out of it, I gave her six Tuinals, she won't know," Lynda was getting jittery which meant a bad mood was ensuing.

"Oh Lynda, I don't want to sleep with her," I squealed.

"It's the only place, you can't sleep with me and Jordan," she was being wicked now.

"What happens if Sid comes back?" I said.

"We don't know where he is, anyway he can't get in, if the doorbell goes, don't answer it."

I had no choice. Lynda swept out of the room. I stood there looking at the heap.

My eyes were sore and I was exhausted. I gingerly approached the mound, fully clothed and sweaty makeup. I crawled in and stayed on the very edge of my side of the bed, in a foetal position. Nancy didn't move. Perhaps she was dead.

I managed to drift off for a few hours. Occasionally opening my eyes a slit to see if Nancy had moved. She hadn't.

A few hours later I got up to make a cup of tea. I felt itchy. I couldn't stop scratching my belly, crotch and crack of my arse. Perhaps it was bad speed or allergic reaction to something. Now I was feeling very uncomfortable. I pulled my slacks down and foraging around, noticed I had more moles than usual, suddenly one of the moles moved; it crawled towards another mole.

Lynda and Jordan came into the kitchen. Nancy still comatose.

“Lynda, I think something’s wrong.”

“What do you mean, dear?” she enquired.

“I’ve got this terrible itch and...”

“Let’s see!” Jordan interjected.

I felt embarrassed showing these two my pubic region.

“Well dear?” Lynda said.

I pulled down the front of my pants, something moved.

“Oh dear,” Lynda said, looking at Jordan sideways.

Jordan raising her lack of eyebrow—she didn’t have any make-up on which was the first time I’d seen her like that. Shocking.

“What?” I yelped.

“You have crabs, my dear!” Lynda declared.

“Am I going to die?” I blurted out.

“No dear, but you are going to have to go to the chemists,” Jordan concluded.

I didn’t know what crabs were, then. Both Lynda and Jordan looked in Nancy’s direction and rolled their eyes and tutted.

I should’ve had a T-shirt made that read...

I CAUGHT CRABS OFF NANCY SPUNGEON.

Life at Oakley Street went on for a few months until Tracy discovered the landlord was charging too much for the room, he was renting the house from the Church Commission for next-to-nothing. We decided we weren't going to pay any more rent. Also we were having problems with our neighbours upstairs.

In the afternoons I'd wander into Blanche's room and sit by the window; smoking, drinking coffee and gossiping. On one such day, as we were discussing punters and how much we'd earned, I noticed a long lead with a microphone attached to it dangling by the window, above my head. I kept on talking and motioned over to Blanche to witness.

"You nosy fucker, how dare you!!" she wailed and with that the mic was dragged back up.

The occupants of the room it was coming from were an old man in a wheelchair—a cripple—and his God-fearing Aussie nurse.

We went racing up to their room, banging on the door.

"You fucking pricks," I banged on the door.

"Open up, you fucking cowards or I'll kick it in," Blanche banged the door too.

From inside came a little squeak, and then a woman's voice said, "If you don't go away, we're going to call the police."

"How are you going to do that, when the phone's in the hall, you fool," Blanche spat.

"We're going to report you to the landlord for the disgusting way you carry on," the old cripple wheezed.

"Go away, we're giving the tape to the landlord... you filthy disgusting creatures, you're the devil's work and you'll burn in hell!!" Mousy nurse said.

We tried the door again but it wouldn't budge.

Blanche and I beat a hasty retreat back to her room. Tracy came in and we told her the story. She would buy a gun the next day and...

I had just seen Pasolini's *SALO* and had an epiphany.

The cripple and the nurse had a cupboard outside their door, where they kept groceries. Later that night, I went to the toilet, taking an empty loo roll, I shat a large turd into the middle of it and then, as though I were carrying the Holy Grail and surrounded by the others, my disciples as it were, we snuck up to their food cupboard and placed the 'stool' inside of a box of Cornflakes.

Early the next morning, Tracy and I were woken up by screams of "Oh my God! Oh my God!" coming from upstairs.



We did have visitors occasionally to our tiny room.

I returned to find Tracy and Little Debbie there with a geezer, who was sprawled on my bed and looked like he'd slept in it. I always made my bed and here he was tangled in my sheets.

"'Ello," said the geezer, fucked-up dyed blonde, big nose, stocky, just this side of good looking. Little Debbie did her trademark giggle and said, "This is Pete."

A sort of embarrassment swept round the room. Had I come upon the tail-end of a threesome? I wanted to sit on my bed but didn't feel... um... what about Pete?

"'Ere Berlin, come and sit down, mate!" Pete croaked.

I did as I was told, I sat next to Pete. He was good looking in a Roman centurion way; he wore a tatty fifties bowling shirt with Pete on the front pocket, unbuttoned, a little skull and cross bones on a string of leather lay on his chest, home-made tattoos on his forearms, the usual 'mum' and 'love and hate'.

"Yeah, I just got out of nick, and was hanging around the dilly trying to get some money and I ran into Debs and Trace," he said, his DMs leaving prints on my white/grey sheets.

I looked at Tracy and she looked at me, defying me to say something.

What could I say?

"So, you on the game, Berlin?" Pete asked.

"Sometimes," I mumbled, staring at the skull pendant nestled in three blonde hairs.

Pete was wearing kohl that had smudged, so it seemed he had the remains of a black eye. I was trying to formulate a question like, “Are you staying here now?” or, “Do you have any drugs?” But I perched there on the end of my bed, dumbstruck.

“Yeah, well I do sometimes, but I like birds, know what I mean?”

I was confused. Pete got off my bed and went over to Debs on Tracy’s bed, he slung himself around her. She giggled. He lay down again, arms behind his head.

I looked at his ‘packet’ (gay slang for crotch). It was thick.

“Come on Debs,” he’d caught me looking at his cock. “Let’s go and get some dosh.” And with that he swung off the bed.

“See you ’round Berlin, Tracy!” and with that he pulled Little Debbie out the door.

They were hardly out of the door when Tracy shrieked.

“OOO, Berlin, that was Pete.”

“I know.”

“No, Pete the murderer!” she screamed.

A look of ?????? on my face.

“Well,” she was so excited I thought she’d burst, “He picked up this punter and went back to his flat in South Ken, posh as hell, and this old queen was into leather and bondage, oh yawn, but do you know what Pete did?”

She didn’t need any encouragement from me.

“He put this old biddy in a full rubber suit, mask, the lot, and a rubber hosepipe up his arse. Pete was speeding out of his brains, then he gets a kettle of boiling water and poured it into the hosepipe... the poor old sod must have been poached to death!”

Tracy on the edge of her bed flapping her hands wildly.

“How fucking great, he actually murdered someone!!”

And I said, “Oh, Tracy.”

MORE VISITORS

“Vivienne’s round for tea!” Tracy bellowed as she flew into our little room. I was lying on my bed gazing up at Joe Dallesandro’s nipples.

“She only drinks Earl Grey, I got some. Oh fuck, we don’t have a teapot,” she grumbled. She rushed up to the crib’s food cupboard and purloined theirs. Vivienne arrived in white ‘God Save the Queen’ muslin and white bondage pants.

In tow was a...

“This is Philippe, he’s a film-maker from Paris and he’s part-Gitane and he’s lookingggg for locations for his next film, he made a film with Nico and Jean Seberg.”

Vivienne twittered on as Philippe stood there nodding and nodding out.

Philippe was a HIPPIE! Long, dark, greasy hair, big nose, bulbous eyes, dressed in flowing blouse, flowing scarf, flowing everything and a carpet shoulder bag.

His nose ran and his eyes were watery. Tracy and I could barely disguise our horror.

Vivienne knew a hippie! But we both adored her and said nothing; perhaps she was being really subversive?

“Philippe comes from a longggg line of French avant-garde film-makers, in the tradition of Luis Buñuel and Jean Vigo, don’t you think he looks like Artaud?”

Whoever he was.

Philippe just nodded and semi-smiled.

We sat on the floor (pretending to be hippies), Tracy made the tea.

“Is it Earl Grey, Tracy? Because I can’t abide any other sort, although I tried Rose Pouchongggg,” Vivienne was oblivious to the oblivious Philippe and us.

I could feel a very deep sneer creep along my face every time I looked in Philippe’s direction. It was getting very tense. Philippe spilt ash on the carpet, Vivienne rubbed it in.

“Malcolm es a shit, I zinc,” Philippe said out of nowhere.

Tracy’s hand became a fist, mine a claw.

“Look, I don’t want to discuss Malcolm, at this moment, Philippe,” Vivienne declaimed.

“What the fuck do you mean?” Tracy snapped.

“Well...” Philippe managed to get out before he nodded out.

“I have to say what I found fascinating about the beheadinggg of Marie Antoinette, was that a certain Duc de Moray had cut her cunt out and wore it as a moustache as he skipped down the Boulevard Saint-Germain,” Vivienne said.

“Zis is not...” Philippe said, sounding like Peter Sellers doing Inspector Clouseau.

I could see Tracy reaching for a can of insect spray.

Blanche suddenly breezed into the room, stopped, went to say something, looked at Philippe and breezed out again.

“Culture is only interestinggg when society is on the brink of revolution... What Malcolm and I are tryinggg to do...”

Philippe snorted (air) at the mention of Malcolm’s name. Tracy was aiming the toe of her boot towards Philippe’s nose.

“...is to really fuck up everythingggg; the Sex Pistols and my clothes, in partnership with Malcolm, are, is, really a vanguard against orthodoxy.”

Vivienne kept mentioning Malcolm, I wonder if she realised it... it was Malcolmandvivienne, one word.

Philippe was now drooling... and even Vivienne noticed it.

“Tracy, I’d just like to say, the next time you make a pot of Earl Grey, you really should let it brew longgger, you need to see that it’s really oily on top, and, Oh, by the way could you work tomorrow?”

Vivienne scraped Philippe off the carpet and departed.

Tracy decided we were going to squat a flat on Beaufort Street; she'd been hunting about for one. If we were true anarchists—why would we pay rent? I never said I was an anarchist—I didn't know what it meant anyway.

But Domini needed some place to stay, and she had a really bad crush on Tracy, unrequited I should say. So one night Tracy took the lock from the front door at Oakley Street and broke into a ground floor flat in Beaufort Mansions.

In the middle of the night we took our stuff round. The flat was spanking new, with carpets, everything.

I had the nursery room, little rocking-horse wallpaper in pinks and blues, no bed. The flat seemed ghostly. Domini and Tracy shared a large room in the front. The place had no heating or hot water. And no lighting.

I stuck up my photos of Judy, Joe and Nell for comfort.

We weren't in place three days when early one morning, the door was broken down and a man in a pinstripe suit with a bunch of heavies came in and threw all our stuff out into the street, ripping my photos off the wall.

They threw me and Domini out, we went around to Seditonaries to get Tracy.

There we were on Beaufort Street, surrounded by our meagre belongings: make-up, clothes, torn up pics and my Teddy bear.

Domini and Tracy called W. She invited them to crash at her flat in Maida Vale.

I had no such luck.

After a year of silence, I had no recourse but to call my mother. She ordered me a cab, I had five pence to my name. So back home to Bromley I went, to hell...

Back on the dole, in my room, a living nightmare. All my habits were firmly in place; still doing speed, staying up all night, going out, and dressing up. Only the prostitution had stopped, it was too difficult, living out in the suburbs. I was isolated once again, the dynamics between my parents and I had changed, in some ways it was harder to live there, they regarded me as a sort of alien presence, but more-or-less left me alone.

I was seventeen. My room hadn't changed at all, it was even more of a void.

My walls now displayed Patti Smith and Nico but still the inevitable blonde boys from porn mags. I bought the Pistols 'Anarchy in the UK' single on EMI even though I never went to the gigs any more.

My existence at Plaistow Grove—very twilight.

I'd occasionally do a punter at Blanche's new flat off Sloane Square. She'd act as Madame and take a small percentage of my fee. I'd still go to Seditonaries to see Tracy.

I bought a pair of black suede slingback sandals, with a 50% discount I paid £7. They were the best shoes I ever had.

Little Debbie, in a Swastika T-shirt, was bouncing up and down on the stool behind the counter, making fish shapes with her lips and bleating the punk motto, "I'm so fucking bored."

Then next time I saw Tracy, she was really fucked up, had put on weight and was pinned and pissed and looked awful in her stained white bondage pants and mohair sweater.

She always had on complete model make-up. She was incoherent.

"Oh, Berlin, I don't know what I'm doing," she said, gouching out.

I just looked at her.

"I mean I don't care," then clutching her stomach, "I've got this fucking awful pain in my tummy, it really hurts," she doubled over.

Then she did something really uncharacteristic, she threw her arms around my neck and burst into tears.

“I feel fucking terrible,” she cried.

I thought Mr Jones must have been giving her a particularly rough time.

Next thing I knew was that Tracy was in hospital. Nobody seemed to know what for.

I guess the stomach pains had gotten worse. I didn’t go and visit her. I hated hospitals.

Jordan and W were always in and out of hospital; I thought Tracy was perhaps in for the same reason—hepatitis via hypodermic.

One afternoon, as I was hiding away in my bedroom, David Bowie’s *Low* oozing from my stereo, my mother called me to the phone.

“Berlin? I’ve got something awful to tell you,” it was W calling from the shop.

“Tracy died yesterday!” she said.

“What, how?” I stammered.

“They think it was cancer,” she sniffed. “The funeral’s Saturday.”

I hung up and wandered into the garden, where everything became blurry.

Tracy’s funeral was a week later at Beckenham Crematorium. She had died from cancer of the bone marrow. She was eighteen. Nearly everyone turned up for the funeral. All The Bromley Contingent, the Pistols excluding Johnny.

It was a bright sunny day, the hearse pulled up, draped over the coffin was a wreath of flowers designed like Jamie Reid’s cover for the Pistols’ album, it read, ‘NEVER MIND THE BULLOCKS, TRACY’.

She would have loved that.

We were all in our Seditionaries drag. At one point, the wind blew up Vivienne’s bondage dress, revealing her bush. We stood outside the church. Julian Temple and crew were filming the funeral at Malcolm’s request, for his forthcoming film *Who Killed Bambi?*...

We were going into the church, when a taxi pulled up and Sid and Nancy fell out and buzzed about like drowsy bees.

It was a very peculiar feeling seeing the coffin go through the doors into the incinerator. I wondered what she was wearing, her white bondage outfit? Who did her make-up?

The door closed, the vicar drivelled on. In the front pew sat a geezer, a Clash roadie called Ray, who was inconsolable. Tracy had been seeing him on the rebound from Jones.

Afterwards, standing around, Vivienne's dress blowing up again, she suggested we all go back to Tracy's parents' for a piss up. I couldn't, I was too freaked out.

The film crew was getting into everybody's face. I've only ever seen a tiny clip of that footage, featuring W overexposed in sunlight.

Images of Tracy. A photo of her in red bondage pants and 'Anti-Christ' muslin T-shirt, head down looking into the camera, pouting, against a backdrop of a bombed-out city. Coming back to the flat in Oakley Street after the boat party, covered in bruises. On the floor at the Vortex club punching Slits drummer repeatedly in the face. And now she was just a bunch of memories, photographs and ash.

Someone dies and someone is born. Blanche had her sex change operation. She had breast implants, a nose job and, down below her navel, what can only be described as a slobbering dog's mouth. It was her new prize, and she was happy to show anyone that asked.

She was now on a mission. She wanted to bed Adam of the Ants—dangerous territory as Jordan was protector/mother/manager/lover to Adam. Still, with the confidence of her new cunt, she began her campaign to get him.

She started by going to all his gigs. Wearing all black PVC gear from the cheap S&M clothes shop She and Me. She worked at it and finally got a date. He sent a car round to pick her up and take her to his flat in Putney.

One night in Sombrero's, Blanche whispered to me her version of the evening. She described champagne, the reading of his 'Ant Alphabet', gloating over pictures of S.S. officers... a little cocaine...

Also how they had rolled around on the floor, Dirk Bogarde in *The Night Porter* playing on TV with the sound down... Brian Eno and Robert Fripp's album *No Pussyfooting* playing, the track 'Swastika Girls'...

“Blanche.”

“Yes, Adam.”

“Does that feel good?” Adam whispered, his index and middle finger in her cunt.

“Yeah. Ummm it does.”

“Blanche?”

“Yes Adam?”

“Can I fuck you up the arse?” Adam said, withdrawing his fingers.

“If you must!” said Blanche, her teeth gritted in disgust. Blanche used her new cunt to make money exactly as she told me she would, on one of those dreary nights stalking business on Park Lane. She made a lot of money. Then became a Madame.

Then bought a second-hand Rolls-Royce company, then bought a title and became Lady something-or-other, then bought a small hotel on the south coast and then, disappeared.

KING'S ROAD REVISITED, SEPTEMBER 2004

Another trek up the King's Road, looking for inspiration and finding only ghosts. Remembering places that do not exist now. Recollecting specific buildings—the Paris Pullman Cinema on Drayton Gardens, off Fulham Road, where I first saw Robert Altman's genius film *Three Women*. This film, based on a dream Altman had, where the three women characters all interchange with each other, summed up my psychological state at the time, a merging of personas leading to having no identity at all and leading to tragedy.

I clung to the persona of BERLIN, underneath I had no idea who or what I was, I was held together with drugs, make-up and a strong will. I always sought solace in going to see films, in all forms of escapism.

I'd always been 'away with the fairies' as it were. I recall driving up to my grandparents' house for the summer holidays with my mother and stepdad, scrunched in the back of their Mini-Cooper car, Pip our hysterical dog showering globs of doggy saliva all over me. I was about thirteen.

Anyway, we were heading for Hunstanton on the Norfolk coast and we had to pass through Lakenheath US Air Force base. The main road went through the edge of the base, so we were surrounded by huge American cars and laundromats... it lasted for a couple of miles and I'd daydream I was in Hollywood. I'd put my sunglasses on and pretend I was a film star.

The Up All Night Diner on Fulham Road, the only 24hr place around, where you sat on cushions at low tables; Lynda had taken me there after she managed to sneak me into Gateways, the women-only bar off the King's Road—featured in the movie *The Killing of Sister George*.

It was strictly no men, but because I looked so girly I passed for Lynda's new young bird... it was exactly like the film... I was quite expecting Coral Brown to saunter in...

Coral Brown was married to Vincent Price in the 1970s, the couple used to come over to London to buy and export antiques back to the States. When I was doing prostitution in Mayfair, a rent boy and his girlfriend, who were positively Dickensian, with dyed orange hair and purple acne, told me a surprising story about the couple. One night, Coral and Vincent were cruising on Curzon Street and picked up the whoring couple and took them back to their apartment... the rent boy went off with Vincent and the girl off with Coral!!

Anyway, back to the Up All Night Diner, it had authentic American hamburgers, not that one could eat them after a night of speeding, but it was the place where you could get vodka and orange served in a teapot (because of licensing laws) at any time.

I used to walk along the Chelsea Embankment in the middle of the night, freaking myself out on a speed comedown, staring at sleeping houses and the sixties church with a big modern Christ sculpture that loomed down at me.

One night Domini and I, both of us drunk, stood outside Mick and Bianca Jagger's townhouse on Cheyne Walk. We both started cooing and whooping, shouting, "Mick, Bianca! Give us some drugs," until finally the top floor window went up and Bianca thrust her head out and just stared at us. We blew kisses and went on our way.

* * *

And so it fell apart... dispersing like confetti... Tracy had died... the Pistols were about to split up. The 'punk' scene exploded. Before, when we'd walk into the Vortex Club you could hear the whispers of reverence: "There's The Bromley Contingent." The last time I went there, or the Roxy, it was violent and dangerous; smashed bottles, kids mutilating themselves with razor blades/broken glass... nobody looked interesting, all like rejects of a litter.

Commercialisation and chaos had taken over. I retreated. The suburbs, again.

A few years passed. Steve Strange and Rusty Egan asked me to meet them in a club in the West End—they told me about a new scene, all about make-up and posing, there would be a shop, a collection of clothes, a band, like the Pistols, and Malcolm and Vivienne... "Like Punk, but different."

Steve and Rusty would be the figureheads, did I want to be part of it? I'd been going out every night for the past three years... it just wasn't going to happen, I thought. So I went elsewhere, nowhere; and we all know what happened to them.

I can see Andy Warhol as Zeus, Father of the Gods, scattering his 'children' far and wide over the decades. Firstly with his own Factory scene, then the Glam rockers, onto us in 1976—The Bromley Contingent—to the New Romantics and finally the NY club kids of the early 1990s. We were all products of Warhol's imagination. All glamour addicts.

Salvador Dali once said to Andy Warhol, "Those punks, they are the shit children."

BERLIN GOES TO BERLIN—2001

I just decided to go—just like that. I'd never been, and here it was, a new century and I was about to land at Tegel airport. It was 8.30 a.m.

I knew no one in Berlin, a couple of friends had given me the address of a cheap hotel. I'd done something vaguely capricious, I'd bought a one-way ticket.

Heaving my briefcase of manuscripts, they went everywhere with me, and a small suitcase on wheels, I took the S-Bahn into Berlin. I had chosen Berlin for obvious reasons but also because I was homeless, I'd lived in New York for three years and then had to come back to London and hated it, so with a bit of spare cash (\$200 = 400DM) earned from writing porn for gay mags in NYC... here I was stepping stones to Berlin.

There I sat on the S-Bahn, looking out at the glum suburbs, and finding myself humming 'Neuköln' from David Bowie's *Heroes*. I could see nothing decadent or glamorous out of my frosty grey window. It was winter.

I'd bought a map of the city and had studied the underground system. I'd traced my fingers over the tube map, committing it to memory. I arrived in Warschauer Strasse, East Berlin. I could see the TV Tower in the distance and more grey buildings, and now it was snowing and I was shivering having been up all night.

I wheeled my case and walked across the bridge to the U-Bahn and took that to Görlitzer Bahnhof.

The cheap hotel was on Wiener Strasse. Dead trees lined the boulevard. It was snowing heavily. I found a room for two nights, that's as much as my budget would allow. The room had two sets of bunk beds in it. Tall ceiling, long windows.

A fat, jolly, toad lady showed me in. Turned the heating on, vaporising the cold. The pillows on the beds were large and flat. Hideous bright patterned sheets that belonged to the 1980s. I took a sleeping pill and crashed.

I awoke and it was dark. I had no idea what the time was. I looked at my stuff on the table: a packet of Gauloise Blonde, my diary, lighter, pill bottle, passport and 185DM,

of which 100 would cover another two nights, then I'd have about 85 to live on until I found work. I was in Kreuzberg, the Turkish district where the German Punks first came in the early 1980s.

I found a café I liked, (an essential), The Bateau ivre, after Rimbaud's poem, perfect. Wooden tables and paper lanterns and everyone smoking. I sat and ordered a coffee.

I opened my second packet of cigarettes, these only cost 5DM = £1.75. I was going to smoke a lot.

I kept remembering that:

1. I don't speak the language.
2. I'm shy.

Although my friends had told me to look in various magazines for jobs and apartments, I couldn't read German. I'd paid for the two nights at the hotel and now I didn't have enough money to get back to London. I had this odd sort of philosophical attitude that things would work out. At least one could 'bunk' the fares on the U-Bahn, there seemed to be no guards or ticket collectors—there were train police who could fine you 60DM if they caught you.

I went back to the hotel and took another pill and slept till the next midday.

I awoke and felt strange, in a no-man's land.

After that moment's panic subsided, I went out. I caught the U-Bahn to Zoo Station.

I wanted to see the locations where they shot *Christiane F*, the movie about teenage junkies in Berlin in 1980. I trolled the alleyways and halls of the station looking for 'Detlef' (the actor, Tomas Hausteine, who only made one film) the beautiful boyfriend of Christiane F.... I saw a few straggly looking rent boys leaning up against a wall, but mostly Zoo was full of drunk old rocker types, leering and spinning about... I walked the platform and corridors that Christiane walked... things were blurring... no glamour or decadence, just sleaze.

Every now and then I'd see the most unbelievably handsome men/boys, real Aryan; tall, blonde, green-eyed, impressive bodies, immaculate skin... some I could imagine in storm-trooper helmets, sweat and blood trickling down their temples...

I had one more day to search for a job and somewhere to stay.

I was far too past my prime to stand with the rent boys at Zoo station. I wandered from café to café thinking maybe I could work as a waiter. Perhaps teaching English, but I had no qualifications and didn't have a CV to send or give to the required schools.

I went back to my room and... smoked... I needed to be careful of my money and couldn't sit in cafes all day drinking coffee. I had only eaten chicken kebabs at 2.50DM. I now had only 75DM left.

I emailed my friends in London about what I should do. They said, "Stick it out, something will turn up."

I thought I'd get an early night. I took a sleeping pill, it didn't work. I was getting really nervous and anxious now... I sat up all night, thinking, smoking, thinking.

I sat in bed reading the Jean Rhys novel *Good Morning, Midnight*, not perhaps the best book to read.

Whenever Jean or one of her characters would find themselves in a desperate situation they'd either stay in bed all day or go to a bar and get drunk. I was now feeling torn between the two ideas.

But I had to be practical.

Midday came and the fat, jolly, old toad came to ask me to vacate my room. I tried to ask her in broken English if she knew of anywhere I could stay for very little money but she just chuckled and said, "No I am sorry."

I took all my belongings, I had a small black canvas bag over my shoulder with a notebook, passport and stuff in. I went to Zoo Station and put the luggage in a locker. It cost 3DM for 48 hours, phew! At least my stuff would be safe.

I started my search around Berlin for somewhere to stay and a job, all prospects were looking very grim. Then it was dark.

My friends in London told me there were saunas where you could rent a cubicle during the night. I began my search. But couldn't find one. I really didn't want to be in a sex parade.

I got back on the U-Bahn and went to Kreuzberg to Oranienstrasse, and found a bar called Roses—it was an odd, tacky place with orange fairy lights and pink fluffy

wallpaper, the clientele were mainly lesbians and Turkish rent boys. I bought a beer and sat on one of their broken sofas, the place had a grungy glamour.

A drag queen done up as Marlene Dietrich sat on a bar stool in front of me, turned towards me and raised her painted-on eyebrow. By this time, what with not sleeping and wandering about all day, I was feeling a bit disassociated. And that one beer made me float.

I saw this young chap occasionally look over. But I couldn't find a smile in my face, anywhere.

"Guten Abend ist..."

"I don't speak German," I said, nipping it in the bud.

"Ach, OK. I can speak a little English, it will be good for me," he said.

He was cute. Big face and deep blue eyes, fair hair, big lips, Slavic.

"My name's Alexander."

I glad I didn't say, "Mine's Berlin"—it would have been lost in the translation.

And I'd stopped calling myself Berlin in 1979. It just didn't seem appropriate somehow.

"Bertie."

"Are you here on holiday?" he asked.

This was school book stuff.

"I'm trying to live here," I hinted.

"Would you like a drink?"—step in the right direction.

"A beer, danke."

He then talked non-stop for the next two hours about everything, mainly acting, he was an actor.

He was handsome and I was beginning to think he might be my port in an ensuing storm. He managed quite well in his pidgin English, but nowhere did I see sign of anything more than a vague flirt.

"Alexander... where's this going?" I asked. I was tired and strung out.

"What exactly are you meaning?" he replied, now looking like Winnie the Pooh.

"Well?" I gave him 'that look'. Which he got. Funny how 'that look' transcended language.

“Oh, I think you’re the best thing this evening.”

Ah, I was saved then.

“But you are not my type really, so we can be friends, no?”

Hum... crushed momentarily and seeing the situation was going nowhere fast and that this meant no bed for the night, I dealt a swift blow.

“NO!” I grumbled.

“Excuse me?” he said, wide-eyed.

“I don’t need another friend,” I lied, cutting my throat to spit in my face.

“Well, maybe we could meet for a coffee at some point?” he ventured.

The bar was getting ready to close. Alexander gave me his phone number and left. I crumpled up the piece of paper with his number on it and dashed it to the floor.

I walked back to the U-Bahn and got on the U1 to Zoo. It was snowing. I couldn’t think what to do. My mind was sort of crumbling.

At Zoo, I noticed a bakery that had just opened. Inside it was warm and brightly lit.

I ordered apple strudel and a coffee. And opened my third packet of cigarettes.

It was some consolation that you could smoke anywhere and everywhere in Berlin.

The coffee was bitter, enhanced by my mood, when all of a sudden this short, fat man, wearing an anorak, engaged me in conversation...

“Ah, guten Morgen!” he said.

Here we go again.

“I don’t speak German.”

“Ah, you English, American?” he said, his rheumy eyes bulging with interest.

“English.”

“Ah good, you won the War,” he chuckled.

He had a frog face, bits of yellow crème and crumbs stuck to the corner of his mouth—if he were a friend, I would have told him about the food at the corner of his mouth, because I think that sort of thing needs mentioning; it’s disturbing on someone you like, but repulsive on a stranger.

“You are visiting Berlin?” he asked.

Why? Oh why, do people always ask the same questions?

“Yes.” I assumed he was trying to pick me up.

A punter at my age!

"I, myself am living here, I teach Japanese to the Germans and German to the Japanese," he declaimed rather proudly. Gosh, that meant he spoke three languages.

"And what do you do?"

"I'm a writer."

I paused and waited for the inevitable response; it came.

"And what do you write," he enquired.

"Books!" There! Perhaps that would do it.

"Fiction books?—My English is good, no?"

"Yes," I droned looking at my cold coffee.

"And what is your name?"

"Philip Sallon," I giggled to myself.

"And Philip, my name is Dieter Schneider, I like to be up very early, you don't mind me talking like this?" he ventured.

Whether I minded was obviously not of any consequence to him.

"No it's fine, I'm just very tired." I looked at the clock on the wall; it was 6.15 a.m. or 00.06.15 hrs in German. I'd been up nearly a day, plus interrupted sleep the night before.

"And so far you like Berlin?" he went on.

"I'm not sure, so far."

It was like a verbal tennis match on barbiturates.

"Yes, I live in East Berlin, with my dog, sometimes I go to Japan, they pay me very well... do you like saunas."

Oh, here we go, he's cutting the chase and going for the kill.

"Saunas?" I replied.

"Yes, they are only 15DM for how ever long you like and you can relax there."

I watched as he stuffed something jammy into his gob. It was then I had an epiphany.

Perhaps I could go back with this cretin to his grotty little hovel in East Berlin, and once there find a blunt instrument and bash his brains in and steal his money—

problem solved. What about his dog? Oh, I couldn't kill a dog, even though I don't care for them that much. Does this old twit have any money?

I looked at his shoes. Cheap. Cheap shoes.

"Yes, in the saunas, there are young ladies too, very nice."

Well, that was a turnaround, he drained his coffee and bid me 'Guten Morgen' and went on his way. I suppose some people just like to talk?

And so I started to walk the streets of Berlin on a cold, breezy Sunday morning. But now I couldn't think straight... Berlin is a huge sprawling city, I walked through the dead winter trees in the Unter den Linden looking up at the gold angel... my internal monologue was getting positively cosmic, I asked the angel to help me out, I remembered a dream I'd had several years before which was in B/W, I was riding a chariot across the skies of Berlin and I passed over the Angel statue, like Boadicea. I didn't feel tired... I stood on the steps of the Reichstag and pretended I was Hitler, giving a speech to no one but a few magpies... I hate magpies they're bad luck, depending on how many you see...

I saw one = sorrow.

I walked to Alexanderplatz and the TV Tower, and stood underneath, looked up, it reminded me of a syringe... Berlin is supposed to be the city of the future, with its amazing architecture, old classical buildings alongside of fifties Communist atrocities, and next to twentieth-century modern... I was wandering deeper into East Berlin along Karl Marx Allee, truly scary buildings here, gargantuan blocks that loomed down and made me feel even more insect-like... I just kept walking—every now and then I'd see posters of yellow paper with a drawing of a fish on them and the words 'party' and 'Fischladen' with a street address but no number...

To me East Berlin looked like one big South London council estate.

I went along Riguerstrasse and eventually came upon a tatty old building covered in graffiti "Rauf Nazi Auf"—"Nazi's get out" (those poor Nazis) and lots of anarchy symbols painted everywhere... a few grungy punks laying, fucked up, on the pavement with mangy dogs beside them, everyone dressed in assorted rags...

The house was four or five stories high, windows open and music blaring from inside. This must be one of the famous East Berlin punk squats I'd heard about, that

had been ‘opened’ before the wall had come down. I went through the door and into a make-shift bar, perhaps I could call on my ‘Punk pedigree’ to help me out... I so needed to sleep somewhere and it was freezing...

Fischladen bar was one long piece of wood, some candles in wine bottles, and dirty old sofas with their stuffing hanging out... broken chairs and a dusty old piano... a few punks were laying on the floor.

I stood there a moment and then headed for the sofa. Some looked, but nobody said anything... it must have been around early afternoon and the party was slowly winding down... a white punk girl with dreadlocks collected empty beer bottles, a black dog in tow... I sat there completely ga-ga.

A bloke with brown, cropped hair, dark green eyes and a front tooth missing, leant towards me and said something in German.

“I don’t speak German!” I mumbled.

“Ah, my English ist... kaput!” he laughed with a gappy grin.

“Um, can I stay—here?” I pointed to the sagging sofa.

“But we, schloss!” he said.

“I don’t have anywhere to go,” shrugging my shoulders.

“You not living in Berlin?” he smiled.

I told him the best I could, my story so far. He scratched his head.

I hope he understood.

“I’m very drunken, now,” he said.

I looked at him closely, in fact I didn’t take my eyes off him. He was handsome in a boyish way, although he must have been in his late twenties, dressed in a dirty navy blue T-shirt and black jeans worn away at the knee, big boots with their tongues flapping.

The room seemed to recede. I was staring very hard at him.

“You have no um, place?” He was considering something.

“Really no place,” I thought I was going to start blubbering.

“Vell, you can stay as my guest, if you vant?”

“I can?”

“If you vant to stay for a while I will have to... ugh my English...”

“Maybe for awhile, yes,” I couldn’t hold it together any longer, tears were trickling down my face.

“It OK, ist cool, you can stay in my room,” he said. “No problem.”

The music stopped playing. A couple of people called out “Hauke!” and he went off.

Hauke was from Bremen, a boatman by trade, but now ran this punk squat. He was one of the ‘top dogs’ of the place, a committed Communist/Anarchist.

He came back sometime later.

“You come with me now?”

We went through a series of doors with dodgy locks into a courtyard, a disused fountain and piles of beer bottles, planks of wood, compost, through another set of doors across a bare room that stunk of alcohol, sweat and cigarettes. Up three flights of stairs, Hauke guiding the way with his fly torch... old newspapers, cat shit, dirt, dead light bulbs, littered the stairway... through a big iron door into Hauke’s room... a tip of sawdust, bits of wood, piles of food wrappers, bottles of beer, cig stubs, a collection of mobile phones and a huge TV and wall safe on the floor.

His bed was raised on planks of wood and covered in a huge white mosquito net, lumps of blankets and duvet. A beaten leather couch along one wall. The ceiling tall and five very large windows.

Hauke, went over to a wood burning stove and started splintering bits of wood and paper and stuffing them into the furnace. What was going to happen now? I felt a bit more energised by Hauke’s hospitality, but exhaustion and hysteria were just bubbling beneath the surface.

“I’m drunk,” he laughed again and then making the sign of the devil, index and little finger raised like horns, went “Yeah.”

“You have my bed,” pointing to the mosquito net thing. “I sleep here.”

Oh well, that told me in one fair swoop—Hauke was straight.

I climbed onto the bed, all my clothes on, clothes I’d worn for two days and nights, I was beginning to really smell, well, like his room.

I lay my head on his dirty pillow and turned to face him. Hauke was looking at me, from the other side of the room, slightly narrowing his eyes. I was feeling sick, all my nerves were screaming and my legs started twitching, cold sweat.

“OK?” he asked.

“Can’t sleep...” I said, closing my eyes.

For some paranoid reason, I didn’t want to take any sleeping pills, I thought they might push me over the edge—well too late for that, over the edge and out there was where I was! I was having, what I now know, was a panic attack, my mouth went drier than sandpaper and my heart was racing so fast I thought I was having a coronary, I sat on the edge of the bed and the room seemed to buckle, and for a brief moment I sensed that the reality in front of my eyes was going to rip apart. I put my head in my lap and did some deep breaths, measuring each in and out breath until my heart stopped racing, and I felt calmer, then I gradually drifted off to sleep. The sleep was dead. I woke up to Hauke’s snoring. But I didn’t know what day it was. The room really was a garbage heap. Stale remnants of food and cobwebs and overflowing ashtrays. Hauke was fast asleep, his legs and arms akimbo on the sofa, still in his T-shirt, but no jeans, I could see his dick nested in a black bush, the skin on his legs totally hairless and very white.

He got woken up by his mobile phone going off in funky jazz tones.

“Morgen,” he said through bleary eyes, and then rattled off down the line in German. He got off the sofa and pulled on his jeans.

“Ya, tschuss... um, your name?” he asked me.

“Bertie.”

“Bertie... you want coffee, we go up to the room and have something?”

“OK, Danke,” I said.

Hauke made a few stretching movements and yawned, clipped his mobile to his belt and lit a cigarette. “We go?” I followed him.

Up to the top of the house through the attic into another attic that joined the house, out of a door and down three flights of stairs into a kitchen.

Hauke put on a coffee pot and tore off some bread, wiped jam on it and gave it to me. I was by now in a strange kind of seventh heaven—Hauke was another Martin. In fact I later found out that they shared the same birthday, but here was Hauke, my straight knight in shining armour, totally masculine, dirty and beautiful, who had rescued me, a stranger, from the cold grey streets of Berlin, I couldn’t believe my

good fortune... I fell in love, well I had a crush at least—no, I was on the periphery of falling in love.

I wondered how Hauke had lost his front tooth. I wanted to clean mine.

A very odd creature came into the kitchen, dressed in dungarees and red bobble hat, sunken face and no teeth—he and Hauke spit, spat, away in their father tongue, the gnome looking over at me and smiling, he had such tiny eyes.

I drank the coffee and had one of Hauke's French cigarettes.

"I told Heinrich, and he said it is OK for you to be my guest."

I said, "Danke" to Heinrich.

Fischladen was a commune, which meant at least one other person who had lived there a long time had to agree with the arrangement, of me being a guest.

Fischladen means 'Fish shop'.

So for the first couple of days I became Hauke's shadow. I didn't feel safe unless he was within a metre radius. I am shy and didn't speak the language, and all the people of the house I met were German and only some spoke bits of English.

Hauke was looking after me, buying me cigarettes and getting the only English language video he could find, *Dead Man* with Johnny Depp for us to watch. He also played me his collection of records—a really eclectic mix. One was by a 1960s girl pop singer called Alexandra—the LP cover showed a bouffant brunette with big cow eyes and a sweet smile.

Hauke played a track, 'Mein Freund der Baum', a waltzy, schmaltzy, ballad.

"What does it mean?" I asked.

"Oh ist called... um.... 'My Friend the Tree?'" Hauke replied.

"But what is she saying, Hauke?" I was genuinely interested and also doing a bit of small talk.

"Um... she sings... The tree is her friend, when raining is, und, she will love the tree even when it is dead..." he said looking a bit bored.

Now Alexandra was belting out the tune, full aching strings and Oom Pah Pah.

"Is she still singing, Hauke?"

"Oh no, she died."

"Oh..."

“A few years back... she died in a car crash... she hit a tree,” he said.

I would rush to the nearest shop and buy Hauke a packet of cigarettes every other day as a thank you.

Hauke's day went on regardless of me, he'd wake to the sound of his mobile phone going off around midday, then get up, put his jeans on, scratch his head, look at me and say, “Guten Morgen”, then dash to the kitchen for coffee and bread, chain-smoking; his phone went off every fifteen minutes during the day. Hauke, being one of the heads of the household and promoter of the weekly party at Fischladen on a Saturday night meant he was always on the go, also his Communist/Anarchist meetings, to which he was completely committed. I'd never been around someone so politically motivated, also someone who after me being there a week, appeared not to wash.

By now, mentally I was in a no-man's land, that is, I could barely function, those two nights being homeless had altered my sense of direction, I felt myself drifting, so each day was centred around getting clean, finding food, etc.... Getting clean; I asked Hauke, it was complicated, basically there was a bathroom, Hauke showed me, he had to attach a bottle of gas to the thingy, turn a few screws and taps, it looked very dangerous, several twists and there was instant hot water.

I had about 50DM left and I was eating free breakfast with Hauke, then at 7 p.m. each evening someone would cook a dinner for 3DM, this consisted usually of rice and some sort of vegetable stew concoction, which gave you chronic diarrhoea. Cigarettes were the only luxury.

I'd brought my baggage from Zoo Station, so now I had my toothbrush.

Little things mean a lot.

I started to feel better with Hauke looking after me, he gave me very basic things, food, cigs, a place to sleep, he even let me have one of his many ‘found’ mobile phones.

There seemed to be no conditions to my staying, well I say that, everyone knew I was Hauke's guest, so when I saw someone from the house and there were at least forty other people living there, I had to say “hello” to let them know I was ‘alright’.

I had to hold eye contact with them, be present.

This was hard work.

I'm trying to write this account of Hauke and Fischladen, of what it was like to be received by a total stranger into his house, that had nothing to do with sex or money.

As the days crept by at Fischladen, I felt powerlessness, as though I were disappearing from myself, as I merged into the squat community, I became less and less, unsure of who, what, where and why I was.

I wasn't a teenager and couldn't throw caution to the winds any more. I'd come to Berlin on whim, to soak up the place that had so influenced and formed my adolescent self, that illusion was now broken.

In reality, I was a mouse drowning in a pail of milk.

After much map-gazing and asking around, nobody really knew, but had a vague idea, I eventually found out where Nico was buried.

In a little graveyard in the Grunwald Forest.

Not difficult to get to, take the S-Bahn to Grunwald and then... On a sunny day I took off, careful to avoid the train police, I'd now been stopped many times and asked to pay the 60DM fine which I never had, I'd given a fake address but they insisted on taking my passport number down. So I had the impression that if I was stopped again, I could be arrested and carted off to prison.

I got off at the forest, having looked at a map. Grunwald Forest is about seven miles long and four miles wide. The forest was quite beautiful, cold sunlight streaming through the tall trees.

I walked further, not seeing anyone else. I came across a small cottage, with a water pump with two tin cups attached to it... feeling more like Hansel or Gretel, birds chirping, I had no idea of the time. It was still light and I was so determined to find her grave.

Suddenly from one of the many little paths, the forest is littered with little paths that lead to who knows where, I saw this butch woman and her bulldog. I plucked up the courage to ask her where the 'freidhof' was.

She stopped and stared at me. She gave me vague directions, while her dog did a shit on a pile of dry leaves.

A toad hopped over my boot.

I had to go north, till I got to the tower, then straight down the main road that wound through the forest until I got to a wooden horse. Then there would be a sign.

So I walked on for what seemed like another half an hour, eventually I found the road, no wooden horse! Perhaps Nico didn't want me to visit her. I was beginning to feel like a lyric in her song 'It Has Not Taken Long' from *The End* album:

"The open glade, the hungry beast, the hunters a-calling, calling, HELP ME, PLEASE!"

Then I came across a wooden hut.

Another ten minute walk back in the forest. I came upon a walled graveyard, covered in moss and ivy. There were about fourteen aisles crossed by another half dozen, lots of Jewish names, many overgrown. No Nico.

Then I spotted it, under the branches of a tree, crammed between two larger graves, covered in ivy and moss, a small headstone; on top, seven stones, placed by various visitors. The inscription read:

Margarete Päffgen 1910—1970

NICO

Christa Päffgen 1938—1988.

She was buried on top of her mother! A dwarf rose bush bearing a single rose at the foot of the grave. The mound seemed small and sad.

I picked some daisies and milk thistle and placed them on top of the tombstone and thought, what becomes a legend most?

***** Domini here

One day, looking through the free weekly listing paper, I saw an advert for a reading by Jon Savage. *England's Dreaming* had recently been translated into German and he was doing a reading/presentation at a place called Tränenpalast.

I asked Hauke what that meant, he told me it was 'The Palace of Tears', previously a terminus, where East met West, where refugees had to say goodbye to their lovers, family members, before they were shunted back across the wall, a place of the dispossessed, of departure.

I knew Jon, he had interviewed me for his book and the documentary *Punk and the Pistols*—he was the first person to give me a nod, to acknowledge that I did play a part, albeit a small one, in 1976-77.

So I went along to the Tränenpalast in my filthy chocolate brown Westwood suit jacket (I'd bought the piece of schmutter in NYC for \$100 and it hadn't been dry-cleaned at all in eighteen months) a new haircut, my hair was long and scooped over one eye, shaved badly at the back. Hauke said, "You look like Hitler!"

The Tränenpalast was a 1950s aeroplane hangar of a building, a few old punks littered about outside.

I saw an open door, pitch black inside, no one around, I slipped in.... The place was a vast cavern, with little tables and chairs and sofas, like a cabaret, a huge stage with a blank screen. The place was busy, I went and stood in a corner near the front of the stage. I spotted Jon standing with a girl and went over.

"Hello Berlin, I mean Bertie—Berlin," Jon said cheerily, looking surprised, raised eyebrow, slight smirk.

He was wearing an original SEX mohair sweater in red and white.

"So Berlin, what are you doing in Berlin?" he enquired.

I hadn't seen him for years.

"Well Jon, I'm living in an East Berlin punk squat!"

"How very YOU!" he giggled. "Well you know it's twenty-five years next year since the Silver Jubilee, that's why I'm doing this book and reading tour, for the last

fucking time dear, then it's got to be all over... really time to move on. Listen I've got to get ready but let's meet here after for a chat. Oh, by the way, this is Connie, my translator."

Connie said, "You're Berlin? I'm reading about you and your party in a few minutes."

I was starting to feel very odd, here I was virtually homeless and in dire poverty and there I was also, about to have a piece of my personal history read, performed on stage in Berlin. It was a wonder my head didn't explode.

Jon and Connie sat at a desk on stage, with a CD player and two microphones, behind them a big film screen... Jon started off explaining about the book then Connie spoke in German.

Then he mentioned my name:

"Berlin named himself after your fair city."

He said I was in the audience, would I stand up, now this was totally surreal, a round of applause, I stood up, did a little nod, sat down.

Jon's performance lasted a couple of hours, playing his favourite records, (X-Ray Spex, Buzzcocks and of course, the Pistols) and then reading from the book, then the Bill Grundy show projected onto the 30ft screen.

"You dirty old fucker," said Mr Jones.

"Here, take this," Jon said handing me a bag of grass. "I can't take this back to England."

Connie sat down and ordered a red wine.

"So you're living in Berlin," she asked.

Jon went to the loo to roll a joint.

"Yes, I'm staying in a squat in Friedrichshain."

"Oh, I live in Friedrichshain."

"It's alright, but there's no hot water."

"Do you need somewhere to stay?" she said very matter-of-fact.

"Well..."

“I have this apartment in Berlin, but I live in Hamburg three weeks out of every month, and you’re quite welcome to have it while I’m not there, I don’t want any money,” she said.

Jon came back from the loo.

“I see you two are getting on, I knew you would,” he said handing me the joint.

“Oh, Bertie, when are you going to write your memoirs?” he said looking me straight in the eye.

“Oh, I don’t know, Jon.”

“You should tell your story.”

“What would I write, a teenage boy lost in suburbia, prostitution and drugs?”

“Exactly,” said Jon through a cloud of smoke, his eyebrow raised way up high.

So I moved into Connie’s apartment in a dreary and secluded part of Friedrichshain.

The streets and buildings of East Berlin are still saturated with misery and oppression.

I even went for an interview to teach English to businessmen and got a contract.

After spending some time at the apartment alone, I suddenly thought, “What the fuck am I doing?” Going to teach English? Live in Berlin? My bubble had burst.

The two friends that had advised me to stick it out, now offered to lend me the coach fare back to the UK.

The journey from Berlin back to London, seventeen hours passing through Germany, Holland, Belgium, France... my life over the past twenty-something years, replayed in flashback... Bromley... Berlin....

Like the penultimate scene from *Cabaret*... when Liza walks Michael York to Zoo Station. Berlin 1933...

“Magazines?” Liza asks.

“No,” Michael replies.

“Chocolate? It’s a long trip,” says Liza.

Michael is silent.

“Listen darling, I’d love to come and wave a tiny white handkerchief an’ all, but there is that interview...” says Liza.

“...and you never know,” Michael chimes in.

“Yeah, you never know,” says Liza sadly, her enormous eyes well up, two big inky lagoons.

“I’ll see ya,” she turns and walks away, head down, hand up, waves goodbye.

I never want to go back to Berlin. It’s a cold, grim, unglamorous city, lacking in charisma, stinging provincial, it reminds me of an old alcoholic aunt who was once vivacious and naughty, and now is just facelifted and cruel.

Yet its myth has been part of my myth, my teenage years. It even crops up as a location and character, Berlin Boy, in my debut novel *Psychoboy*; the young protagonist finds himself homeless on the streets of Berlin, drug-addled and desperate, I wrote and published the book six years before I went there.

So does dream become reality? Or is it the other way around?

Is the line between real and unreal blurred? If so, make reality like this.

I’m sitting here in east London, late at night, one or two cars shhshhhhhhhhh past my window, outside empty tennis courts, in the distance, gasworks. I have just returned from the 24hr Tesco to get a pint of milk, it was drizzling, every now and then I spat, dodging the occasional snail... I wondered if I spat onto the snail’s shell, would it slow it down?

And the Bromley Contingent; a spooky pack of guttersnipes that happened to be in the wrong place at the right time?

And Bromley finally got what it deserved; it’s turned into one huge shopping mall.

END

Afterword 2022.

**Before I sat down to write the memoir
Berlin Bromley, I made a few attempts in
short story form. This is the first one I
wrote called ‘Blue some afternoons’.**

Blue some afternoons.



Berlin 1977. Drawing by Eddie Cairns.

About the Author

Bertie Marshall was born in Greenwich, South London in 1960. His books include the debut novel- *Psychoboy*s (1997) *Nowhere Slow* (2014) collected writings, and the novella, *From Sleepwalking to Sleepwalking* (2016) **Wild, Re-Write**, as part of ‘**Critic as artist**’ exhibition at Reading University (2017) **The Peeler** (2018) and **Pete’s Underpants** (2019) both published by Dostoyevsky Wannabe. In 2015 the British Library purchased his writing archive. He is a recent recipient of The Gilbert and George Arts Foundation award for outstanding writing. In 2021, Bertie released ‘Exhibit’ a compilation album of songs and spoken word tracks from the 80s/90s through Upset the rhythm records.

You can follow him on Instagram @Bertie31860.

Praise for Bertie Marshall’s debut novel PSYCHOBOYS

‘You’re the nastiest of the punk boys, those who know who dead pirates are’

-**Kathy Acker** – poet/critic and author of *Blood and Guts in High School*

‘Intense’ - **Dennis Cooper** - American novelist, poet, critic, editor and performance artist

‘A powerful, urgent, brilliant book’ – **Tim Teeman** - journalist, author and broadcaster based in New York City. Senior Editor and Writer at The **Daily Beast** and author of *In Bed with Gore Vidal*

Praise for **PETE'S UNDERPANTS**

‘Compelling and filmic, funny and sharp – the dialogue so crisp and fast moving. As Thomas Mann writes “there is joy among the elect” when writing is concise, solid, ironical, true’ – **Michael Bracewell**, journalist and author

‘It’s a howl, a hallucinatory lament to a lost love, a muse, full of drugs, movie theatres, movies, books. I was mesmerized and, finally, hearbroken’ – **Drew Gummerson**, author